INDIAN PHILOSOPHY
A COLLECTION OF READINGS

Philosophy of Religion

Edited by
Roy W. Perrett



Indian Philosophy

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Series Editor

Roy W. Perrett

Massey University

Series Contents

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
New York London

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
270 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
2 Park Square
Milton Park, Abingdon
Oxon OX14 4RN

Garland is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Philosophy of religion / edited with introductions by Roy W. Perrett.
p.cm.— (Indian Philosophy ; 4)
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-8153-3611-X (alk. paper)
1. India—Religion. 2. Philosophy, Indic. 3. Religion—Philosophy. I. Perrett, Roy W. II. Series.

B130.I63 2000 vol. 4
[BL2003]
181'.4s—dc21
[210'.954] 00-062309

5 volume set ISBN:	**0-8153-33670-1**
Volume 1: Epistemology	0-8153-3609-8
Volume 2: Logic and Philosophy of Language	0-8153-3610-1
Volume 3: Metaphysics	0-8153-3608-X
Volume 4: Philosophy of Religion	0-8153-3611-X
Volume 5: Theory of Value	0-8153-3612-8

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Series Preface

No anthologist succeeds in including everyone's favorites, so a few words about the principles of selection seem appropriate. Firstly, as with other volumes in this Garland series, priority has been given to journal articles, rather than book chapters. However, some essential book chapters have been included, and the introductions to each volume include references to significant books. Readers in search of further bibliographical assistance should consult what is now the standard source: Karl H. Potter, *Bibliography of Indian Philosophies,* 3rd rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995), and the on-line updates to it available at the "Indian Philosophy Bibliography" (http://faculty.washington.edu/kpotter/). Secondly, the emphasis throughout is on *philosophical* studies of Indian philosophy. Consequently, much excellent historical and philological work has been omitted. Thirdly, the desire to make Indian philosophy accessible to interested Western philosophers has meant not only that all the selections are in English, but also that most of them use a minimal amount of unglossed Sanskrit terminology. This restriction has prevented the inclusion of more work by Indian authors.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge gratefully all the good advice and generous assistance I have received from Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, Mark Siderits, and (most especially) Stephen Phillips. The blame for any shortcomings that may remain rests, of course, solely upon my own shoulders.

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Series Introduction

The five volumes of this series collect together some of the most significant modern contributions to the study of Indian philosophy. Indian philosophy is one of the great philosophical traditions of the world. Unfortunately, however, its philosophical riches are not always as readily accessible to Western philosophers as might be desired. The selections in these volumes help to redress this situation by giving readers easy access to some of the best philosophical work in the area, including material that is often difficult to locate.

Collectively the selections in these volumes explore many of the important commonalities and differences between the Indian and Western philosophical traditions. These similarities and differences are philosophically pregnant. There is enough in common between Indian and Western philosophy to suggest that the philosophers in both traditions are often engaged with similar problems and hence should be able to communicate with each other. However, there are also sufficient differences between the traditions to suggest that they may have some novel perspectives to offer each other.

In choosing the selections for this series priority has been given to journal articles, rather than book chapters. However, some essential book chapters have been included, and the introductions to each volume include references to significant books. The emphasis throughout is on *philosophical* studies of Indian philosophy. The desire to make Indian philosophy accessible to interested Western philosophers has meant not only that all the selections are in English, but also that most of them use a minimal amount of unglossed Sanskrit terminology.

Volume 1: Epistemology is concerned with the nature and scope of Indian *pramāṇa* theory, i.e. that part of Indian philosophy concerned with the nature and sources of knowledge. Indian philosophers developed a causal theory of knowledge and acknowledged the existence of a number of valid ways of knowing, including perception, inference and testimony. The Indian *pramāṇa* theorists thus discussed many issues that have also occupied Western epistemologists, often offering importantly different perspectives on these matters. They also sometimes addressed various interesting questions about knowledge that are unfamiliar to Western epistemologists.

The selections in this volume discuss Indian treatments of epistemological topics like the means of knowledge, realism and anti-realism, truth, knowledge of knowledge, illusion and perceptual error, knowability, testimony, scepticism and doubt.

Volume 2: Logic and Philosophy of Language is concerned with those parts of Indian *pramå~a* theory that Western philosophers would count as logic and philosophy of language. Indian philosophers and linguists were much concerned with philosophical issues to do with language, especially with theories of meaning, while the Indian logicians developed both a formalised canonical inference schema and a theory of fallacies. The logic of the standard Indian inferential model is deductive, but the premises are arrived at inductively. The later Navya-Nyāya logicians went on to develop too a powerful technical language, an intentional logic of cognitions, which became the language of all serious discourse in India.

The selections in this volume discuss Indian treatments of topics in logic and the philosophy of language like the nature of inference, negation, necessity, counterfactual reasoning, many-valued logics, theory of meaning, reference and existence, compositionality and contextualism, the sense-reference distinction, and the nature of the signification relation.

Volume 3: Metaphysics is concerned with the complement to *pramāṇa* theory, i.e. *prameya* theory. Whereas the *pramāṇa* are the means of knowledge, the *prameyas* are the knowables, cognisable entities that constitute the world. With respect to the number and kinds of such entities, there was a very wide variety of opinion among classical Indian philosophers — including variants of monism, dualism and pluralism about both entities and kinds. Many metaphysical topics were debated, but two of the most important were causation and the nature of the self. The competing theories offered about these two issues also raised other questions about the metaphysics of wholes and parts, substances and properties, and universals and particulars.

The selections in this volume discuss Indian treatments of topics in metaphysics like ontology, constructionalism, universals, negative facts, mereology, causation, relations, freedom and determinism, and theories of the self.

Volume 4: Philosophy of Religion is concerned with something that can be described as "Indian philosophy of religion," i.e. "philosophy of Indian religions." Contrary to popular Western belief, classical Indian philosophy was not indistinguishable from Indian religion — as even a cursory glance at the first three volumes of this series will demonstrate. Religious concerns, though, did motivate the work of many Indian philosophers. However, important differences between the major Western religions and the major Indian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) mean that the shape of Indian philosophy of religion is often significantly different from that of Western philosophy of religion.

The selections in this volume discuss Indian treatments of topics in the philosophy of religion like the problem of evil, God, theological monism and dualism, atheism, the concept of a perfect being, reason and revelation, rebirth and karma, religious language, religion and politics, ritual and *mantra*, and the religious determinants of metaphysics.

Volume 5: Theory of Value is concerned with Indian discussions in the areas of ethics, politics and aesthetics. The Indian philosophers had a good deal to say about the theory of value as they vigorously discussed topics like the ends of life and the relation of virtuous action to those ends. A traditional Hindu classification recognises four classes of values: *dharma* (morality, virtue), *artha* (wealth, power), *kāma* (pleasure), and *mokṣa*

(liberation). *Mokṣa* is usually held to be the highest value and is extensively discussed in the paradigm Indian philosophical texts. Indian political and legal theory is concerned with the values of *artha* and *dharma*. Aesthetic pleasure is one of the subject matters of a developed body of writing on aesthetic theory. *Rasa* ("flavor"), the special feeling or enjoyment that pervades an artwork or is aroused in its contemplator, is commonly seen as detached from the aims and concerns of ordinary life, with some even suggesting that it provides a foretaste of the bliss of *mokṣa*.

The selections in this volume discuss Indian treatments of topics in the theory of value like the proper ends of life, the relation of *dharma* and *mokṣa*, liberation and pleasure, the sources of our knowledge of right and wrong, the ethics of non-violence, the status of the supra-moral, egoism and altruism, the theory of *rasa*, aesthetic experience and catharsis.

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Volume Introduction

Contrary to popular Western belief, classical Indian philosophy was not indistinguishable from Indian religion — as even a cursory glance at the first three volumes of this series will demonstrate. But religious concerns did motivate the work of many Indian philosophers (as they did too the work of many of the great Western philosophers), and there definitely is something that can be described as "Indian philosophy of religion," i.e. "philosophy of Indian religions" (Matilal 1982, Perrett 1989). However, important differences between the major Indian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) mean that the shape of Indian philosophy of religion is often significantly different from that of Western philosophy of religion.

One fundamental difference is that theism is not central to all the Indian religions in the way it is to the Western religions. While there certainly were classical Indian philosophers who were staunch monotheists (e.g. the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, the Dvaitins, the Śaiva Siddhāntins), overall this was not the dominant trend. In the first place, Buddhism and Jainism are both non-theistic religions. Then within Hinduism orthodoxy is traditionally determined by an acknowledgment of the authority of the Vedas, not a belief in God. Hence among the orthodox Hindu philosophical schools Sāṃkhya and Mīmāṃsā are both atheistic, Advaita is ultimately non-theistic, and Yoga and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika are minimally theistic in the sense that they allow only significantly attenuated powers to God. Two implications of this for Indian philosophy of religion are evident. First, Indian philosophy of religion is much less centered on philosophical theology than is Western philosophy of religion. Second, even when the Indians engage in philosophical theology, it often has a rather different flavor (Pereira 1976).

Consider, for instance, Indian discussions of the problem of evil (Herman 1976, Matilal 1982). The theistic problem of evil is how to reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent God. Jaina and Buddhist atheists appealed to the existence of evil as an atheological argument, but Indian theists responded by limiting God's powers, holding that even God is constrained by individuals' own karma. Nor did they accept that the existence of evil in the world showed that the world is not God's creation. The world is God's *līlā* or divine play (Sax 1995), a creation with no purpose, and hence something for which God bears no moral responsibility.

On the other hand, Indian theists were not always persuaded of the soundness

of the natural theologians' arguments for the existence of God (Smart 1964). The philosophical theologian Rāmānuja, for instance, criticized teleological arguments for God's existence, basing belief in God instead on the authority of scripture. Part of his motivation was to retain a proper creaturely dependence: salvation should rest solely with God, and not with human reasoning. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, however, has a long tradition of natural theology, including elaborate causal and cosmological arguments for the existence of God (Bhattacharya 1961, Chemparathy 1972, Vattanky 1984 and 1993). But the God *(Īśvara)* of the Naiyāyikas has distinctly attenuated powers: he does not, for instance, create the world *ex nihilo*, though he is the author of the Vedas. Yoga has an even thinner conception of God: *Īśvara* is nothing but a self (*puruṣa*) that has never been confused with nature (*prakṛti*), and his only role is as a meditative focus for the *yogin*.

Other Hindu philosophers effectively manage without God altogether. Classical Sāṃkhya is atheistic, and Mīmāṃsā even more aggressively so. The Advaitin monists hold that *Brahman* is ultimately non-personal, while the Kāśmir Śaivite monists identify the God Śiva with our true self *(ātman)*, thus dissolving the usual theistic gap between God and his creation.

All of these schools, however, acknowledge the authority of some kind of revelation. For the Hindu philosophers, it is the Vedas. Consequently non-theistic Hindu philosophers like the Mīmāṃsākas and the Advaitins deny that the Vedas are authored by God, claiming instead that they are eternal and authorless (*apaureṣeya*).The Mīmāṃsākas go even further, arguing that the Vedas are purely injunctive and that all apparently declarative sentences in the scriptures are in reality merely declamatory.

The Buddhist and Jaina philosophers entirely reject the authority of the Vedas, but they accept the authority of their own scriptures authored by (highly developed) humans. In Jainism the scriptures are the products of the totally omniscent *tīrthaṅkaras*, whose omniscience guarantees the reliability of the scriptures in much the same way as God's omniscience guarantees the reliability of the Vedas for some Hindu theists. The Buddhist position is a bit more complicated: the scriptures are the word of the Buddha but the Buddha's omniscience is restricted to knowledge of all the truths necessary for salvation, and our ordinary human knowledge of the truth of the doctrines expressed in the Buddhist scriptures is based upon independent logical and empirical investigation.

While there was thus considerable debate in the Indian tradition about the existence of God and about the nature of revelation, there was surprisingly little argument about a crucial background assumption shared by all Indian philosophers (save the Cārvāka): a belief in the twin doctrines of rebirth and karma. (Strictly speaking, these two doctrines are logically distinct, but in the Indian context they are very much intertwined). Perhaps because of this consensus, Indian philosophical arguments for the truth of the doctrine of rebirth are not plentiful (Smart 1964, Hick 1975). Indian defenses of the law of karma are also scarce, though there was much discussion of its mechanisms (O'Flaherty 1980, Reichenbach 1990).

Finally, there was also much Indian discussion of various issues raised by particular features of Indian religion. These include: the relation of orthodox Indian religion to religious imperatives, the relation of religion to politics, the meaning of ritual and *mantra*, the nature and cognitive significance of meditation (*dhyāna*) and

devotionalism (*bhakti*).On all of these topics the Indian philosophers of religion had interesting and novel things to say.

The selections in this volume begin with two articles on Indian theodicy and the concept of *līlā*. Herman analyses the commentaries of the rival Vedāntin philosophers Śaṃkara and Rāmānuja on *Brahmasūtra* II.1.32–34. They both agree that the doctrine of *līlā* absolves God from blame for the evils and sufferings in creation, and that the rebirth assumption means that each of us is beginninglessly responsible for our own suffering. Herman is critical of the *līlā* solution to the problem of evil, though much more sympathetic to the rebirth solution. Biderman's piece, however, defends the intelligibility of Śaṃkara's version of the *līlā* theory of creation by invoking the distinction between regulative and constitutive rules and explaining creation in terms of constitutive rules.

Kāśmir Śaivism is a monistic school which holds that the true self (*ātman*) is identical with the God Śiva. In contrast with the better known Advaitin monism, it also holds that the self is creative, a subject of actions. Nagel's article discusses both the "trancendental" arguments of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta for this doctrine of unity and the idea of God implied by the doctrine (see also Lawrence 1999).

Monism (particularly in its Advaitin form) was fiercely opposed by Vedāntins of the Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita schools (Lott 1980). Thus the Viśiṣṭādvaitin philosophical theologian Rāmānuja espoused both monotheism and an ontological dualism of God and creation (Carman 1974, Lipner 1986). But Rāmānuja also stressed the intimate relation between God and his creation, which he held to be analogous to the relation between human persons and their bodies. Lipner's piece explores Rāmānuja's claim that the world is God's body — a theme from which, he suggests, Christian theology and practice might profit (see also Oversee 1992).

The other major monotheistic Vedāntin school is Dvaita, founded by Madhva (Sharma 1981, 1986). Betty's article presents an attempted refutation of Advaita by the sixteenth century Dvaitin philosopher Vādirāja, who argues that monism is logically committed to the absurd position that *Brahman* is identical with the souls that sin and suffer (see also Betty 1978).

The next two selections both deal with Indian principled atheism, but from different angles. Bilimoria discusses the curious position of the Mīmāṃsā, an orthodox Hindu philosophical school of scriptural exegetes committed to deconstructing theistic arguments in order to shore up the independent authority of the Vedas. Part of the impetus for this Mīmāṃsā project is the influence of the very differently motivated atheistic arguments of the Buddhists, lucidly reviewed in the paper by Hayes. The Buddhists rejected both the existence of God and the authority of the Vedas, but the Mīmāṃsākas labored to show that the latter issue was logically independent of the former.

Although Buddhism in India was consistently opposed to theism, when Buddhist philosophers began to think systematically about the properties essential to a Buddha they began to attribute to the Buddha various great-making properties much like the traditional properties of God. Hence Buddha came to be seen as omnipotent, omniscient, and even coextensive with the limits of the cosmos (Griffiths 1994). Griffith's paper presents one such systematic theory of Buddhahood, that of classical

Yogācāra, and offers some comparisons with the Christian perfect being theologians' attempt to conceive of God as a maximally great being.

Indian treatments of reason and revelation are the focus of the following two articles. Taber presents the Advaitin position as expounded by Samkara, who rejects reasoning with regard to those spiritual matters knowable only through scripture but admits it for other purposes (see also Murty 1974). Hayes addresses the complex relation of the Buddhist epistemologists to the question of the authority of the Buddhist scriptures. He shows how some of the Buddhist philosophers saw epistemology as a strictly secular science, while others saw it as part of an overall religious program (on Buddhist hermeneutics see further Thurman 1978, Lopez 1988).

Central to all the Indian religions are the notions of rebirth and karma, though classical Indian philosophical arguments for the truth of either doctrine do not abound. The paper by Perrett discusses two arguments for pre-existence and defends the metaphysical coherence of the general Indian account of rebirth. Explanations for the scarcity of Indian defenses of the law of karma are offered in the papers by Potter and Deutsch (see also Perrett 1998). According to Potter, the "law of karma" is to be understood as analogous to the "law of causation": neither are really laws of nature, but rather presuppositions of inquiry. Deutsch goes further, pointing out that the law of karma cannot be justified in terms of any of the *pramāṇas* recognized in Advaita and hence logically has the status of what he calls a "fiction" (which does not necessarily mean that it is false).

Griffiths' paper, in contrast, construes Buddhist karmic theory as committed to various straightforwardly factual truth-claims, a number of which are demonstrably false (see further White 1983, Griffiths 1984). Forrest also finds difficulties with the claim that reincarnation accounts for karma and inherited responsibility. Instead he offers a speculative reconstruction of the doctrine of karma which does not require the truth of the reincarnation thesis, suggesting that we can replace reincarnation by "participation" in a collective entity (for a different treatment of karma in terms of collective responsibility see Perrett 1998).

The two succeeding articles by Biderman and Perrett are both in different ways concerned with the relation of orthodox Indian religion to the notion of *dharma*. Biderman discusses the philosophical implications of the Mīmāṃsā non-cognitivist analysis of *dharma* in terms of religious imperatives, an approach that effectively equates language and religion (see also Biderman 1995). Perrett addresses the question of the traditional relation of religion to politics in India, arguing that there are at least two major strands of thought on this issue in the classical Indian philosophical tradition. One strand favors an internal relation of some sort between religion and politics, the other an opposition.

The Vedas are primarily concerned with ritual and worship, and among the demands of *dharma* upon members of the twice-born castes are various ritual obligations. Ritual, then, is central to orthodox Indian religion, and *mantra* is not only an essential part of Vedic rituals, but also of later religious developments in both Hindu and Buddhist tantrism (Alper 1989). McDermott's article is an attempt to analyse certain ritualistic acts of *mantra* recitation as illucutionary acts and provide necessary and sufficient conditions for their successful performance. This approach assumes, however,

that *mantras* are speech acts, forms of language. Staal's provocative piece emphasises instead the meaninglessness of Verdic ritual, denying that ritual consists in symbolic activities which refer to something else. *Mantra* is largely assimilable to ritual and thus alinguistic. However, ritual is an activity governed by explicit rules and hence a subject amenable to serious study, as the Indian science of ritual demonstrates (see Staal 1988).

The selection by Smart offers a bold interpretive hypothesis about the religious determinants of Indian metaphysics, constructed around the polarity between meditation (*dhyāna*) and devotionalism (*bhakti*). Smart argues that there are various predictable correlations between an Indian philosophical school's position with respect to that polarity and the presence or absence within that school of certain other elements like theism, absolutism, the existence of the self, rebirth and the possibility of liberation.

Smart's thesis might be challenged in at least two distinct ways: either by questioning the presuppositions of his typology, or by denying the details of his claims about particular systems. An example of the former response would be to question his assumption that there were ever any discrete "schools" of Indian philosophy. Such scepticism would be an implication of Krishna's provocative paper (see also Krishna 1991). The supposed existence of such "schools," Krishna argues, is just one of three prevalent "myths" about Indian philosophy. The other two "myths" are that Indian philosophy is spiritual and that it is bound by unquestionable authority — assumptions also endorsed by Smart, though much more guardedly.

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A. L. Herman Indian theodicy: Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja on Brahma Sūtra II. 1. 32-36

Whatever other differences the two major proponents of Vedānta may have, they reach a high accord in their comments on Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma Sūtra* or *Vedānta Sūtra* II. 1. 32-36.[1] This high accord centers on the proper treatment, handling, and solution of what in the West is called "the problem of evil" and in particular "the theological problem of human evil." Both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja deal with the problem of evil elsewhere in the *Brahma Sūtra bhāṣyas,* where the question is taken up as to whether or not Brahman's nature is compromised by the imperfect world,[2] but nowhere else does their treatment reach the high pitch and sustained philosophic force as in the passages under discussion here.

The principal question taken up in *B.S.* II. 1. 32-36 is whether or not Brahman (God) created the world. The answer that both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja give is in the affirmative. But the way to that answer provides us with some highly interesting philosophic jousts with the problem of evil, and some entertaining answers to numerous insistent objectors along that way. Let me take the *sūtras* one at a time, freely translate each of the five, and then attempt to explain what is going on as that going-on is understood by Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja. The program of argument here calls for certain unnamed objectors supporting the thesis that God cannot be the cause of the world, followed by replies from the opponents of this view, Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja. In each case, the latter two Vedāntists build up the objector's position with reasonable arguments and then attack these arguments with reason and scripture (*śruti* and *smṛti*).

Bādarāyaṇa opens with the summary of an objector's argument:

II. 1. 32. Brahman cannot be the cause of the world because to cause or create involves motives or purposes (and if Brahman has either, He is imperfect).

Śaṁkara puts the argument supporting the objector's conclusion into the form of a dilemma: "Either God had a purpose or he didn't, a motive or not." If "purpose" is rendered "desire," I think the force of the objection can be

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1 *Brahma-Sūtra Shānkara-Bhāshya, Bādarāyaṇa's Brahma-Sūtras* with Shankarāchārya's commentary, trans. V. M. Apte (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1960), pp. 337-342; *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with the Commentary of Rāmānuja,* trans. George Thibaut, Sacred Books of the East, ed. F. Max Müller, vol. 48, pt. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), pp. 477-479. In addition to the foregoing commentaries, I shall be relying on the Sanskrit text in *The Brahma Sūtra, The Philosophy of Spiritual Life,* trans. S. Radhakrishnan (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), pp. 361-365. Quotations from these three works will be identified by '*S*', '*Rj*', and '*Rk*', respectively.

2 E.g., *B.S.* II. 1. 21-29.

seen in a number of interesting ways, and ways that relate to what might be called "the creator paradox." For if God created the world, He did it for a purpose. If He had a purpose then He desired some goal. But if He desired something, then He was lacking something. But if He lacked something, then He's not perfect, that is, not wholly fulfilled. Śaṁkara summarizes this objection, which he and Rāmānuja will shortly attempt to answer, as follows: "Now, if it were to be conceived that this endeavor of the Highest Self is useful to itself because of its own desire, then such supposition would contradict the scriptural statement about the Highest Self being always quite contented."[3] Thus that horn of the dilemma leads to a contradiction.

But suppose Brahman created without a purpose. This way, too, there is a problem. For to act without purpose is in effect not to *act* at all. And if creating is an act, then one could not create without some purpose. A contradiction results: If one tries to create without purpose, then one cannot create, for to create means to act purposefully. God ends up purposelessly purposing, a contradiction. Śaṁkara states this horn of the dilemma as follows: "If, on the other hand, one were to conceive no such purpose (behind such endeavor), one would have to concede that (in such a case) there would not be any such endeavor. . . ."[4] In summary, if God creates with purpose, then this act exposes a glaring inconsistency in the nature of God. On the other hand, if God tries to create (endeavor, desire, act) without desire, endeavor, or action, this proves contradictory and impossible. But must we be hung on these horns? No. Bādarāyaṇa slips between them followed by a host of Vedāntins. Both of our commentators must step a narrow line in what follows: first, between having God as the cause of the world while avoiding the conclusion to which the creator paradox leads; and second, having God as the cause of the world while avoiding the conclusion that God brought evil into it since He was the cause of it. The latter puzzle is, of course, the problem of evil.

II. 1. 33. But as with men at times, so with God, creation is a mere sport.

Sport (*līlā*) is understood here to be a third sort of activity. It is therefore neither purposive nor purposeless, those words being inapplicable to what God's sport is really like. Śaṁkara uses the example of breathing—it is not an act of will but follows simply "the law of its own nature."[5] Thus *līlā* prompts creation out of sheer joy, an overflowing from God's great and wonderful sportive nature. We have here, then, a solution of sorts to the problem of evil. It amounts to saying that while evil exists in the creation, it cannot be due to its "creator," since what He did was not really an act of creation

[3] *Ś*, p. 337.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ś*, p. 477.

at all; the creation is a kind of playful overflowing of His joyful inner nature. Suppose we call this "the evil-in-the-world-is-not-from-God-who-did-not-create-it-but-merely-sported-it solution" or "the *līlā* solution." Rāmānuja speaks to the *līlā* solution with an entertaining example: "We see in ordinary life how some great King, ruling this earth with its seven dvīpas, and possessing perfect strength, valor, and so on, has a game at balls, or the like, from no other motive than to amuse himself. . . ."[6] Moreover, it is not in creation alone that *līlā* is evidenced, but in the world's ultimate destruction as well: ". . . there is no objection to the view that sport only is the motive prompting Brahman to the creation, sustentation, and destruction of this world which is easily fashioned by his mere will."[7] Some comments follow on this attempted solution to the problem of evil.

1. The Vedāntists actually don't need the *līlā* solution to counter objections raised by the problem of evil. All objections can be handled rather neatly, we shall see, by what we shall call "the rebirth solution." For, as we shall show, all superhuman, human, and subhuman suffering or evil can be explained or adequately accounted for by the rebirth solution, together with one or two slight additions involving, for example, the nonbeginningness of the world.

2. *Līlā* solves nothing as far as the problem of evil is concerned, for while *līlā* may be a purposeless act, it is surely an activity about which we can ask, Who did it? That is to say, labeling *līlā* as mere motiveless, goalless sport, sensible enough in itself, does not rule out asking, Whose intention was it to engage in this motiveless activity? God is not responsible for the purposes in *līlā,* for supposedly there are none, but He is surely responsible for the act that brings *līlā* into existence. Let me make this clearer. Suppose I am going to play a game. Suppose the game I play is like observing a work of art, an aesthetic activity, in which there are no goals, purposes, or ends, but just activity for activity's sake, enjoyment without repercussions (that is, I am not doing it to win a prize, raise my blood pressure, impress my peers, or work up a sweat). But while I have no desires raised and satisfied in the aesthetic or game activity itself, I did have an antecedent desire and it was only realized when I subsequently played the game. If we distinguish between the play as activity, aesthetic in itself, and the play as a-something-to-be-done, a goal in itself, then we can see that the former is consequenceless and goalless at the time the activity is going on, and since there is no motive being satisfied, it is like *līlā*-play without purpose. However, the latter, involving a decision to play, the getting of the ball, the going to the museum, the bringing about of the act of play, aesthetic indulgence, or *līlā,* surely has a goal or

[6] *Rj,* p. 477.
[7] *Ibid.*

aim, namely, goalless or aimless activity. I am not responsible for the purposes in *līlā,* for there are none. But I am responsible for the act that brings *līlā* about. Thus I may be responsible and to blame for what happens after *līlā* is over, or after separate acts of *līlā* have been made.

3. I bounce a ball on the wall. My neighbors are annoyed. They say, Why did you bounce the ball? I say, I had no purpose. They say, but your bouncing keeps our baby awake, disturbs our reading, frightens my wife, angers my mother-in-law, cracks our walls. Now, can I say, I'm not to blame—I was only playing, and we all know there are no purposes in playing? That would be silly. What am I responsible for? The bouncing. Does the bouncing bother anyone? No. It's the noise from the bouncing that bothers. Could I conceivably argue that I'm not responsible for the noise? Nonsense. In the act of play, from my point of view, what I do is without purpose. From my neighbor's point of view, what I do has results that are all too evident.

4. I pull the wings and legs off a baby bird, as Richard Brandt has said Navajo children do in their play. Someone says, What are you doing? and I say, Playing. I have not excused my act, only described it. Granted that in a game the purpose is lost, that is, the game's purpose is lost in the game, to say this does not excuse what results from the game, but simply labels a certain sort of activity, and rules out silly questions like, Why are you playing a game? Thus to describe God's activity as *līlā* is to describe the play act from two possible points of view. From God's point of view, it is a description of a purposeless, aimless play, without motives, without intentions. But from the neighbor's point of view, from the suffering bird's point of view, *līlā* is fraught with effects and consequences that are undesirable. *Līlā* cannot be used to justify the results that follow from the act; *līlā* merely describes the act. The Vedāntists have mistaken the description of *līlā* for a justification of *līlā.*

5. While one cannot ask, Why are you playing that game? after one has been told that a game is being played, one can, nonetheless, ask, Why are you playing that game that way? If I move the king two places in a chess game (and I am not castling) and you say, Don't you know the rules of chess?, your question would be quite legitimate. If the game has rules and one violates the rules, one can ask, What game are you playing? If God plays a game of creation, and seems to violate rules for playing the creation game, we might very well ask, Doesn't He know the rules of the game of creation? I assume this question is at the very heart of the problem of evil. And philosophers are notorious for having all sorts of legitimate suggestions for better ways of playing, and better rules for, the creation game.

6. Some games which one plays in a sportive mood can be won or lost. Chess and most card games can be played to such a conclusion. Some games, like bouncing a ball on my neighbor's wall, cannot be played to a winning or

losing conclusion. But all games can be played better or worse, with greater or less facility, more or less joy, commitment, playfulness, indulgence, and what-have-you. "A man full of cheerfulness on awakening from sound sleep dances about without any motive or need but simply from the fullness of spirit, so is the case with the creation of the world by God."[8] But such a joyful man can dance poorly or well, better this time than last. To leap out of bed and dance on the sides of one's feet, clumsily, is no good at all. One can learn to express one's sportive feelings better than that. Practice in expressing joy is possible and necessary to true joyfulness. If I leap out of bed, overflowing with *Gemütlichkeit* or *Freude*, and then trip all over my feet in expressing my feelings, I am not going to be very joyful for very long. One expresses one's joy and sorrow, and one's feelings in general, in appropriately tried and tested ways: at the piano, singing in showers or cars, kissing and hugging friends or one's self. One can get better at such expressions, just as one can improve one's self in other purposeless or goalless activities, like games. It is therefore legitimate to ask, When Brahman, through *līlā*, expressed His joy, why didn't He do it better? If He is perfect He could, and if He's good He would want to, so why didn't He? We are back once again to the problem of evil.

7. Śaṁkara's example of breathing is curious, but the same question raised above can be applied to it. Some people are poor breathers—"shallow breathers," my physician calls them. They breathe at the very top of their lungs; their rate of respiration, instead of the normal sixteen per minute, runs twenty-five to thirty. They must breathe fast, for only one-fourth to one-third of their lung's capacity is being used. They are bad breathers—but they can be taught to breathe better. Looking at the creation, one could ask of Brahman, Why didn't He learn to breathe out or in better? Once more we are back to the problem of evil. Thus the *līlā* ploy solves nothing.

Finally, as we have seen, Rāmānuja adds another dimension to the *līlā* story that will make the problem of evil stand out even more strongly: ". . . sport alone is the motive prompting Brahman to the creation, sustentation, and destruction of this world. . . ."[9] That other dimension is the dissolution (*pralaya*) of the universe, for Brahman, in His/Its trinitarian role of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, is of course the exhaler (Brahmā), the sustainer (Viṣṇu), and the inhaler or destroyer (Śiva) of the universe. Thus if Brahman's play involves not simply creating and maintaining the universe, but if Brahman is the great destroyer as well, and if that too is play, then Brahman's putative sins are far grander than those ever imagined by any Western theologian with respect to Deity. The Vedāntist has his work cut out for him, indeed.

[8] *RK,* p. 362.
[9] *Rj,* p. 477.

But as I have tried to indicate, the Vedāntists have another theodical card to play that seems to get them out of the problems raised by *līlā*.

II. 1. 34. Discrimination (treating beings unequally) and cruelty cannot be attributed to God, for He is aware of the Karman of beings; and the Scriptures say so.

The objector, as interpreted by Śaṁkara, opens his case by saying: "It is not reasonably sustainable that the Lord is the cause of the world, because there would result the predicament of (the fault of) discrimination and cruelty (attaching themselves to the Lord). . . ."[10] In the West a distinction is frequently made between evils *caused* by man and evils *endured* by man as sin and suffering, respectively, Augustine's distinction between *peccatum* and *poena*. The objector tells us here that both sin and suffering could be attributed to God if God were indeed the Creator of the world. The objector then continues with another example of evil—call it "cosmological evil"—that we have seen above in Rāmānuja's commentary. Śaṁkara's objector, in his turn, says: "Similarly by his inflicting misery and by destroying all his creation, faults of such pitilessness and cruelty, as would be abhorred even by a villain, would attach themselves to the Lord."[11] Then the objector concludes again that the Lord cannot be the cause of the world. The cyclic act of absorptive destruction is on a scale so vast that, aside from rather curious cosmologies such as those of Empedocles, the Stoics, and Friedrich Nietzsche, it has no strict parallel in the West, unless one counts the biblical Armageddon and Flood, or the Last Judgment as envisioned by Albrecht Dürer. This mythical vision of destruction and de-evolution, this horrendous cosmological display of the Lord's ferocious and destructive side, comes closest to what Leibniz would call "metaphysical evil," and to what Augustine on a human scale had called "original sin." Both metaphysical evil and original sin intend an imperfection inherent in the basic cosmic stuff or material, respectively, in the universe and man, because of the fact that though each was created by God, each fell short of the perfective majesty of God. Each may be good, but, as Augustine and Leibniz are at pains to try to bring across, each is nonetheless imperfect.

There is undoubtedly confusion here between metaphysical imperfection and moral imperfection such that, given the first, the second does not necessarily follow in the way Augustine and Leibniz thought it did. But the objectors Śaṁkara serves up to us do not have that problem. They are not caught in any such confusion since their point is not so much that the creation is good or bad (they do not say) but that, whatever its moral or meta-

[10] *S*, p. 339.
[11] *Ibid.*

physical nature, it has to be destroyed. Since nearly all Hindus accept the cyclical theory of history and cosmology, there would indeed seem to be a problem: the Lord does destroy the creation, men, animals, gods, the whole glorious and inglorious works. Hence with this cosmological or metaphysical evil we have three distinct formulations of the problem of evil, since we have three evils: human evil, superhuman evil, and subhuman evil. Thus the objector's case.

The form this evil takes comes closest to certain doctrines of metaphysical evil in the West, as I said, but only because the scale, the sheer quantity of each, is the same. However, Indian attitudes toward the quality of the creation are far different, particularly for those cosmogonies that see nature, man, animals, and the gods as all having been created from a similar substance. Thus both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja argue at *B.S.* I. 4. 26 that the creation is Brahman since Brahman is the material cause of the creation; Śaṁkara uses the analogy of clay and the pots made from the clay, and at *B.S.* I. 4. 27 he uses the example of the spider (Brahman) and its thread (world) to make his cosmogonic point. Rāmānuja is more cautious in these passages, realizing as he does that the evil in the creation could be attributed to Brahman if the connection between them is too close. Especially in *B.S.* I. 4. 26 and 27, this threat seems more than obvious to him. He agrees in the latter commentary that Brahman has the entire universe for Its body, but the universe is the result of Brahman modifying (*pariṇāmayati*) Itself "by gradually evolving the world-body." Both authors agree that Brahman is modified is some way, but the question remains, Has It been modified sufficiently to escape the problem of evil with respect to the creation?

The cosmogonic theory most prevalent in Western metaphysical theories, creation *ex nihilo*, avoids a "pantheism" by stressing the absolute separation between creator and creation, but leaps faith-first into the nasty tangles that Augustine and Leibniz get into: If the creation is imperfect, how can you still call it good? and, How could a perfect Creator create an imperfect universe? This gulf between man and God, inherent in most Western theological cosmogonies, is reflected in the theological dogma regarding the utter transcendence of God, the absolute dependence and depravity of man, and the agonizing sense of guilt and the necessity for atonement that pervade most classical Western religions. Indian religions, perhaps because of their cosmogonic theories, do not have these particular problems.

From *B.S.* II. 1. 34, we thus far have *two* objections to the Lord's being the cause of the world: first, that the Lord would be responsible for evil in the world, and second, that the Lord would be responsible for the destruction of that world. Let us call the first the "discrimination and cruelty argument," and the second the "destruction argument." Both arguments, as we have seen, lead to the problem of evil in all three of its formulations. Rāmānuja expands

on the discrimination and cruelty arguments in an interesting way, expertly displaying the two parts of this argument. Call the first part "the discrimination argument." Objectors, according to Rāmānuja, would say: "But the assumption of his having adequately created the world would lay him open to the charge of partiality, insofar as the world contains beings of high, middle and low station—Gods, men, animals, immovable beings. . . ."[12]

The discrimination argument is frequently expressed in the form, Why was I born poor? blind? a *Śūdra*? lame? with such and such defect?, when other persons I know are not poor, blind, *Śūdras*, lame, or defective. In other words, if the Lord is impartial and just, why are there such terrible inequalities in the creation? Doesn't God play favorites? Therefore, isn't He partial, unjust, and therefore imperfect?

The second part of this argument, call it "the cruelty argument," is also familiar to us, and Rāmānuja states it simply that God would be open to the charge ". . . of cruelty, insofar as he would be instrumental in making his creatures experience pain of the most dreadful kind. . . ."[13]

The arguments thus presented by the imagined objectors of both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja come down then to the discrimination argument, the cruelty argument, and the destruction argument. All three, as we have seen, lead to the problem of evil, for they respectively embroil the perfect majesty of the Lord with injustice, cruelty on a micro-scale, and cruelty on a macro-scale. But all three are apparently neatly handled by Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja with the same counterargument, that is, the rebirth solution. Śaṁkara says:

> The Lord should rather be looked upon to be like 'rain'. Just as rain is the general cause which makes rice and barley grow, while the different potentialities inherent in their seeds, are the cause of the disparity between such rice and barley, even so in the creation of Gods and men etc. the Lord is but the general common cause only [see below], while for the inequality between Gods and men etc., they have their own different individual actions as the cause. . . .[14]

Rāmānuja explains further that it is because of *karman* that different potentialities inhere in men, and that whatever happens to men is due to their own previous actions. Quoting "the reverend Parāṣara,"[15] he says: "He (the Lord) is the operative cause only in the creation of new beings; the material cause is constituted by the potentialities of the beings to be created."[16] Rāmānuja adds that "potentiality" here means *karman*. There then follow from both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja references to the scriptures.

[12] *Rj*, p. 478.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ś*, p. 340.
[15] Cf. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* I. 4. 51-52.
[16] *Rj*, p. 478.

The key to the Lord's escaping complicity in cruelty and evil lies in the phrase "operative cause" for Rāmānuja, or "general common cause" for Śaṁkara. It can best be understood by returning to Śaṁkara's rain and grain analogy. Seen in this light, the Lord emerges as the beneficent and benevolent gentle rain that drops from the heavens, watering the just and the unjust alike. In philosophical parlance, God looks like a necessary but not a sufficient condition for growth or evil in the world, hence He seems relatively blameless; for the true motivating or dynamic forces of creation, maintenance, and destruction in the universe are the transmigratory souls themselves which are *karman*-driven, returning lustfully and thirstily to the source of their longings, the trough of the wicked world. Some comments are in order on *B.S.* II. 1. 34.

1. It is easy to see how the discrimination argument and the cruelty argument can be handled by the rebirth solution. The conditions of birth, and the evils and goods attendant upon them, can all be laid to *karman* and the various cosmic processes operating seemingly independently of the Lord. What ill befalls you, that you deserve. It is true that God cannot help you—the *karman* must be played out. It is also true that this seems severely to limit God's power: for if there is indeed a cosmic force, *karman*, and cosmic results of this force, *saṁsāra,* operating independently of the will of God, then God's power would seem to be curtailed. But just as Saint Thomas's God could not raise an unraisable stone, or make tomorrow occur today, so also it might be countered here that Brahman cannot make the universe unjust. And surely to alter karmic laws for one's own purposes would make that universe unjust. Thus the rebirth solution might counter the arguments of discrimination and cruelty while at the same time it produces some puzzles regarding the conjunction of God's love and mercy (let no man suffer) with God's justice (let no man suffer purposelessly). The rebirth solution, however callously employed, can thus be used to explain and justify the most abominable cruelty. But can it justify cosmic cruelty, that is, can it satisfy the destruction argument?

2. Why must the entire universe be dissolved? Why must the *Kali Yuga,* with all its attendant woes and ills, be followed by even greater woes and ills issuing in the supreme cataclysmic climax? Two answers are open to the theological cosmologist turned theodicist:

a. The world is so supremely wicked at this point, so thoroughly filled up with wanton, unregenerate, unrealized souls, that *mokṣa* for any of them is impossible, and the *līlā* must consequently end. It may therefore be good of God to stop all that wickedness, to relieve the sufferings of all those unfortunate souls.

Thus the Lord is in complete control, He sees the way things are, and by

an act both merciful (to end their suffering) and just (they deserved this end) He throws the switch and the dissolution occurs. Here again rebirth would or could counter the destruction argument.

b. The Lord has no choice. The cosmic process is automatic, so that after the required number of years have passed, the *Kali Yuga* arrives and the process of disintegration and dissolution and destruction must occur whatever God's feelings in the matter.

One is reminded of Plotinus, of course. The process of manifestation is such that the farther away from the One the creation evolves, the more non-Being it has, the more instability it contains, the more evil it manifests, until like a ball on a rubber band having expanded to its greatest permissible length, it suddenly springs back to its source. This answer throws us once again into the old puzzle about limitations on God's powers mentioned above in 1. For it would seem that universal cosmic processes are at work such that God could not suspend them. This may mean a limitation to His powers, or it might again simply be a case of God's being unable to do anything contrary to His nature without involving Himself in self-contradiction. The cosmologists must, it seems, worry over this problem if the rebirth solution is to answer the problem raised in the destruction argument. If the Lord is responsible for the end and the end contains evil, then it would seem *prima facie* that the Lord is responsible for evil. How responsible? Indians themselves differ as to whether or not the law of *karman*, and presumably other cosmic laws as well, are controlled by God. The *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and Aurobindo Ghose, among others, maintain that the law of *karman* is in varying degrees apparently under the guidance and control of God since *adṛṣṭa* alone is unintelligent and consequently cannot produce the proper, that is, just effects. But in Jainism, Buddhism, the Sāṁkhya, and the Mīmāṁsā "the law of karman is autonomous and works independently of the will of God."[17] This produces for the Indian theodicist a curious dilemma, which I call "the *saguṇa* paradox": If God is in control of the law of *karman* then He is involved with the suffering and misery dispensed through or by way of the law; thence the problem of evil with its gnawing consequences. If, however, God is not in control of the law of *karman*, and it works independently and autonomously of God, then God is not all-powerful, since an impersonal and autonomous force is somehow one of the conditions for suffering and misery. The theodicist welcomes neither conclusion.

3. This brings us to Śaṁkara's analogy: God is like rain; the help rain gives is, in the language of Thomas Aquinas, for example, merely permissive

[17] Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1950), p. 17.

and not causative (in the sense that it is not responsible). But what happens to an argument like the permissive argument in a theodicy like St. Thomas's? Thus even to permit evil when you have the power and nature to stop it is immoral. Some comments on Śaṁkara's way out:

a. God is not like rain, for the analogy can be twisted all to pieces from the simple fact that rain is neither all powerful, all knowing and beneficent, nor benevolent; it's just wet.

b. Rain is the occasion for seed growth, but rain does not know that this seed contains, let us say, ergot; rain does not know that more than 1 percent ergot in feed grain or wheat flour can cause tissue damage and death due to alkaloid poisoning in animals and humans. But these are things that the Lord presumably knows. To know this, to have the power to prevent it, and not to prevent it is surely, to say the least, curious and inconsistent, if not downright immoral.

c. If God is an "operative" or "general common cause," what does this mean? To say that God is a necessary condition to seed growth, like rain or water, will not do. For if we make God's will, hence God, a full-fledged necessary condition for evil, then God is morally responsible for evil, just as rain is physically responsible for growth. But while we cannot blame rain for the seed's growth even with physiological ergotism as the outcome, we can blame God who, unlike the rain, could have prevented the evil because of His peculiar moral properties. To make God a causal factor at all, in whatever sense, would lead to His complicity with, His responsibility for (in a strictly personal-human sense), and thence His blameworthiness in the resulting situation.

4. If God is either implicated in the end (hence blamable) or merely a pawn in the hands of uncontrollable cosmic processes (hence not all-powerful), it would seem that He is also involved in both of these ways in the beginning of the creation or the origin of the universe. Thus suppose we grant that the rebirth solution takes care of the three arguments advanced above, so that my life today with its constituent suffering is the result of my previous life. There is a kind of sense to this, and despite the puzzles, even a sort of justice to it such that one must come to admire the ingenuity and boldness of the rebirth solution face to face with the problem of evil. But what about the origin of evil? In particular, What about a pure unsullied soul at the beginning, in the Golden Age, at the start of it all? What then brought about evil? I could not be responsible for that, because I was not there before event number one to make my fall the product of *karman* and rebirth. Thus Radhakrishnan puts the objection: "Many passages in the *Upaniṣads* tell us that 'In the beginning there was Being only, one without a second'. There was no *Karma* which had to be taken into account before creation. The first creation at least should have been free from inequalities."[18] So where did they come from? God? But this objection, surely a familiar one to Westerners, is parried by the Vedāntists in the *sūtra* that follows:

[18] *Rk*, p. 364.

II. 1. 35. If it is objected, that in the beginning there could have been no differences, and the Lord must then be responsible for the differences (good and evil) that came, then we counter, there is no beginning.

Radhakrishnan speaks to this conclusion: "The world is without beginning. Work and inequality are like seed and sprout. They are caused as well as causes."[19] Śaṁkara agrees that the objection stated above in 4 would indeed stand as valid, if it were not for the beginninglessness of the world. Using the seed and sprout example mentioned previously, he concludes that action and creation are like the seed with its sprout that gives rise to seed again, and so on and so on: "But transmigratory existence being beginningless, there need not be any objection for action and the variety of creation, to act, alternately as cause and effect of each other, like the seed, and the sprout. . . ."[20]

But now a fundamental difference between Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja emerges. Rāmānuja, quoting the *śruti*, argues that the flow of creation goes on through all eternity and that the souls have always existed, though subsequently their names and form were developed: "The fact of the souls being without a beginning is observed, viz. to be stated in Scripture. . . ."[21] He then quotes the *śruti* and selects one passage in particular that makes his point about the eternal and pluralistic nature of souls: "Moreover, the text, 'Now all this was then undeveloped. It became developed by form and name' [*Bri. Up.* I. 4. 7] states merely that the names and forms of the souls themselves existed from the beginning."[22] Of course, none of this could be said by Śaṁkara, who, as we shall see, has problems precisely because he cannot speak of eternal and plural souls. Rāmānuja concludes: "As Brahman thus differs in nature from everything else, possesses all powers, has no other motive than sport, and arranges the diversity of the creation in accordance with the different Karman of the individual souls, Brahman alone can be the universal cause."[23]

In summary, Rāmānuja can hold that God and individual souls are distinct and have existed from eternity. As we have said, with his strict Advaita position Śaṁkara cannot maintain such an apparent pluralism, however hedged about and qualified Rāmānuja might subsequently decide to make it. But this internal disagreement does not alter the fact that the argument for the beginninglessness of the world seems to take care of the objections to the rebirth

19 *Rk*, p. 364.
20 *Ś*, p. 341.
21 *Rj*, p. 479.
22 *Ibid.*
23 *Ibid.*

solution mentioned above in 4. The whole matter is developed further in the last *sūtra* we shall discuss.

II. 1. 36 The beginninglessness of *saṁsāra* is proved by reason, and found in Scripture.

Rāmānuja advances no arguments in his commentary at this point; he very briefly summarizes what he has more or less said already. On the other hand, in his commentary Śaṁkara devotes nearly six times the space that Rāmānuja does to expanding on a point he had previously raised in *B.S.* II. 1. 35. In that earlier *sūtra bhāṣya,* Śaṁkara had said that we would be involved in a circularity if we assumed that there was a beginning with no prior human actions, and that the Lord was guided in his dispensings of good and evil to living beings by their prior actions (the argument he attacks also is self-contradictory), for then work depends on diversity of life conditions, and the latter in turn would depend on work.

In the *bhāṣya* to *sūtra* 36, Śaṁkara delivers what I take to be five separate arguments to establish the beginninglessness of *saṁsāra,* or at least five arguments can be wrung without violence from the following statement (I mark the arguments with Arabic numerals):

> That transmigratory existence is beginningless is reasonably sustainable. [1] If it were to have a beginning, then it having come into existence capriciously without any cause, [2] the predicament of persons who have attained Final Release being again involved in transmigratory existence, would take place, [3] as also the predicament of 'fruit' arising without any action having taken place, because (under such supposition) there would be no cause for the disparity between pleasure and misery (to come into existence). [4] . . . Without action, a physical body would not result, nor would action result in the absence of a physical body, and hence it would all result in the fault of mutual interdependence. If on the other hand, transmigratory existence is understood to be beginningless, then it would all be reasonably sustainable. . . . [5] That, transmigratory existence is beginningless, is understood both from the Scriptures and Smritis.[24]

Let me take these arguments in order and look closely at them. The general form of all of them is essentially *reductio*. Thus, accepting a beginning of the world, you have to accept: (1) capricious or chance creation; (2) released persons becoming unreleased; (3) effects arising without any causes; (4) physical-body-effects arising without action-causes in particular, and action-effects arising in the absence of physical-body-causes in particular; and (5) the wrongness of *śruti* and *smṛti*. But all of (1) to (5) are, Śaṁkara says, patently absurd, so our assumption must be wrong; hence *saṁsāra* has no beginning. But does all of this really follow? Let us suppose a beginning:

[24] *S*, p. 342.

1. Why must we admit to "capriciousness" (Apte introduces the word in his translation; I do not find it or any synonym for it in Śaṁkara's text) and why must it be causeless? If it happens by chance, then chance causes it. What is wrong with chance causes? But why resort to such subterfuge? God could perfectly well cause the world. By an act of His super will He could bring it into being *ex nihilo,* or out of His own superabundant Self. It is true that this gets us into the problem of evil, but it certainly does not lead to the absurdity to which Śaṁkara claims it must lead if we accept the beginning-hypothesis. Our possibilities are not limited; to think so is to commit the myopic fallacy. There is a cause, according to our counterargument, and it can be chance or God; hence Śaṁkara's narrowed possibility does not apply.

2. There is nothing to guarantee that liberated souls must perforce return to *saṁsāra.* It is true that nothing guarantees that they will not on the information we have been given here. But if we do have a cause, God, then He could guarantee that liberated souls do not return. The assumption that they must or will is again a form of the myopic fallacy. The belief that they might could be equally well entertained under either a beginning-hypothesis or a beginningless-hypothesis. If chance rules the universe they might return, but with chance ruling could one even speak of liberated souls? There might be none at all. If God rules, they need not return, unless God Himself is capricious, and in that case we are back to chance once again.

3. The third argument, of course, is predicated on the assumption that that first beginning moment of *saṁsāra* must be an effect of some action. But we have seen that it could be the effect of God's action. To assume as Śaṁkara does that human first moments *must* be the effect of previous human moments is absurd and without support. When the first gibbering primate came out of the trees and silently walked erect, he was then surely the *first* silent and erect nonarborial primate: the first human being. Śaṁkara's whole difficulty here, of course, is that he holds strenuously to a *satkāryavāda* theory of causation and a *pariṇāma* theory of cosmogony. These assumptions can be attacked, and presenting a countermodel, for example, with the gibbering primate above, would be one such approach. This counterargument to Śaṁkara will be expanded on in 4.

4. Granted that physical bodies and action are dependent in one direction, that is, a situation in which action causes physical bodies, there is nothing to necessitate mutual interdependence. To assume it, as Śaṁkara does, is to beg the whole question loudly and mightily. For we can argue that physical bodies do not cause action, the first action at least, for that first action could be caused by God in an act of creation *ex nihilo,* let us say, and surely God is not a physical body. Thus there is no reason to fall into the net that Śaṁkara has spread before us; we simply question his presuppositions. With respect to 3 and 4, I think it is obvious that they both rest on the same

causal assumptions such that if either 3 or 4 can be successfully attacked—and I am not saying we have done that—then 4 and 3, respectively, must necessarily fall as well.

5. *Śruti* and *smṛti* are notorious for being many things to many people. It is curious that although Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja both quote scriptural sources to support their proofs for 36, neither quotes the same passages. Rāmānuja quotes selections to back up his Viśiṣṭādvaita, while Śaṁkara, of course, carefully steers away from such verses. Thus quoting scripture in the end can prove nothing when passages can be selected to support such diverse views on the soul as those of Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja.[25] This ends our discussion of the *sūtras*.

CONCLUSION

Whatever their basic differences, Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja are agreed on the basic issues regarding the problem of evil. These are essentially three:

1. They both agree that *līlā* absolves God from blame for the evils and sufferings in creation. Who after all can blame a child for acts done in joy and playful exuberance? But the problems resulting from our analysis of play, its putative purposelessness, and its *prima facie* innocence, were too enormous to permit the *līlā* solution to stand as a solution to the problem of evil.

2. The rebirth solution can account for all the evil, human, superhuman, and subhuman, around us today (cf. the cruelty argument and the discrimination argument). Final cosmic dissolutions can be accounted for (the destruction argument) by a form of the rebirth solution that stresses the downright unregenerate state of the creation immediately preceding and even during that dissolution. Thus the rebirth solution manages to meet these three arguments that promised peril for the Lord and that would make the problem of evil genuinely insoluble.

But the price may be high. We are involved once again with problems about the goodness and powerfulness of God who saw what was coming (if He could) but permitted it to happen anyway. If this is justice, perhaps we have need of less of it. Thus while the problem of extraordinary or gratuitous evil can be explained by a reference to previous *karman*, this cannot, the ordinary man might feel, justify the evil. The Vedāntist may counter with the assertion that there really is no extraordinary (unearned or chance) evil, but all is deserved and all is paid back by the law of *karman*. Most persons might object on two grounds:

[25] Cf. *Ś*, p. 342, and *Rj*, p. 479. Radhakrishnan, the great synthesizer, quotes the scriptural selections from both philosophers (*Rk*, p. 364).

a. The doctrine is seemingly callous, for it attempts not only to *explain* evil by the rebirth solution but also to *justify* that evil at the same time by calling it "right" or "deserved." One is reminded of early Puritan attitudes to poverty and the poor—the poor you always have with you and their suffering is the will of God. Whether the will of God or the will of *karman*, the position might seem somewhat callous to the ordinary man.

b. The doctrine may lead to quietism and a certain passiveness of spirit that many would find personally and socially immoral. Thus if people suffer because of their previous bad deeds, then if the law of *karman* is seen as the universal arbiter, and if it is just and right in what it brings about, any attempt to assuage the sufferings of others consequently will be seen as an abridgment of their need, their right, to suffering and cleansing. Hence the right thing to do would be to wink at the human plight, and go about one's own merry old selfish moral business. The position might seem to the ordinary man as inevitably leading to such a quietistic conclusion. Further, not only are there these problems with man and the world resulting from accepting the rebirth solution, but we have seen that there are theological problems quite outside the rebirth solution that seemingly place the Divine in the touchy position of having perfection while permitting evil He could prevent, or preventing an evil creation from having so much extraordinary evil. One can well ask, Granted that evil necessarily must come, why is there so much? Why is it so hideous? Why is it so seemingly senseless? Again, of course, the Vedāntist has a ready reply to all such challenges.

3. Both Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja agree, furthermore, that God cannot be responsible for the beginning of creation for the simple reason that *saṁsāra* has no beginning. This raises at least one question now, not concerning rebirth and *karman* that He cannot control as in 2 above, but concerning a beginningless creation He could not start. The whole notion of beginninglessness needs analysis here, and I want to mention two minor problems connected with it:

a. The Vedāntists speak about a final destruction, or if not a *final* ultimate dissolution, then a series of penultimate ones. How, it might be asked, can you have a dissolution and then a creation without involving yourself in a beginning? If the *Kali Yuga* will end in violence and suffering because all deserve it, then was the Golden Age which preceded it not a time of "beginning" in some sense of that word? And if a beginning in some sense of that word, then how about God and evil in some sense of those words? And if a beginning and God and evil in some sense of those words, then why is there not a problem of evil in some sense of those words?

b. If the Vedas mention, as they do in their various cosmogonic moods (e.g., *R.V.* X. 129; 190ff), origins of the universe, then are these rather straightforward metaphysical myths to be subjected to procrustean therapy

just to save Vedāntists from a nasty puzzle? Thus if the mythology of creation does indeed say that there was a beginning, in some sense of that word, in non-Being, or *puruṣa,* or in an act of Indra or Brahmā, and if you are inclined to take your *śruti* seriously, then is it not the better part of philosophic valor to admit to beginnings and face the philosophic music, rather than to hedge about what "beginning" might mean so that, stretching it a bit, one can come to face oddities like the problem of evil? Again, the ordinary man might be affronted by this Vedāntic ploy in what otherwise must be seen as a series of brilliant theodical moves to solve the problem of evil in *B.S.* II. 1. 32-36.

Shlomo Biderman A 'constitutive' God—an Indian suggestion

I

The problem of creation lacks well-defined or agreed-upon boundaries. The problem can be dealt with from the point of view of a "pure" cosmology, which develops a theory of this or that causality as the origin of the world, without relying on any theological presuppositions. By contrast, many views of creation embrace theories that rely on theological presuppositions and advance theological speculations. The consensus among Western theistic religions is that creation is inseparable from the existence of a transcendent creator-God; accordingly, these religions represent the theological aspect of creation as bound up with the existence of God. According to the prevalent theologies of Western religions, God's being the creator is what endows the world with its purposiveness. In this view, the world is not the product of chance or arbitrary decision, but exhibits an intelligibility that derives from the perfect plan of the omnipotent being. Moreover, the claim is often made in support of theism that the intelligibility of the universe constitutes a good reason for believing in the existence of God. Both classical theologians and theistically minded philosophers of religion have adopted this, the so-called argument from design.[1]

Regarding the world as the product of God's absolute will might perhaps solve one theological problem, but it does so at the cost of raising others. On the assumption that God created the world with some scheme in mind. there arises the problem of accounting for all those things about the world that do not appear to conform to that scheme. For example, the classical theological problem of evil arises in this way. If God—who by his nature is absolutely good—created the world in accordance with his will, and did so alone, then how is evil in the world to be explained? Similar considerations provide grounds for discomfort in attributing freedom of the will to man: man's moral autonomy is not easily reconcilable with a world created according to rigorous divine laws.

A bold "solution" to the problems stemming from the theistic theory of creation would be to give up the assumption of the existence of a creator-God. While this move would effectively do away with the problem of evil and the problem of free will, it would be unacceptable for those who hold that the assumption of a first cause is necessary in order to account for the existence of causal laws, and thus, ultimately, for physical phenomena.

A possible way of maintaining the existence of a first cause of the world, while steering clear of such seemingly intractable theological problems as that of evil, divine retribution, and so forth, would be to posit the existence of a creator-God but regard the creation as lacking any purpose or end. This proposal appears in the *Brahmasūtras* II.1.33. In this *sūtra* God is described as creating the world in *līlā*—a term that may be translated as sport, enjoyment, play, and so forth. Thus, creation is regarded as having neither evident nor hidden motive. The same holds

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true with regard to the way in which God sustains the world, as well as to the possibility of God's destroying the world and creating other worlds in its place; all these acts are described as mere *līlā*.

In this article I wish to examine the proposition that God be regarded as creating the world in *līlā*, as it is developed by Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras*. I do not intend to discuss the connection between this theory of creation and Śaṅkara's philosophy in general. Thus I shall not deal with the question of the relation between Śaṅkara's theory of creation and his epistemological and metaphysical positions, despite the fact that it can be maintained that his theory of creation follows directly from his basic epistemological and metaphysical principles. I shall restrict my analysis to Śaṅkara's exposition and defence of his *līlā* theory of creation, with an eye to answering the question whether Śaṅkara ultimately succeeds in defending the theory. To this end I shall provide an exegesis of Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* II.1.33, where the theory is espoused. Reference to Śaṅkara's other writings will be made only when it will shed direct light on his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* II.1.33. At the same time, I shall make use of a general conceptual distinction—that between regulative and constitutive rules—in order to clarify Śaṅkara's view of God and creation.

I should like to emphasize that it is my belief that, in addition to its intrinsic philosophical interest, Śaṅkara's theory, properly understood, can shed light on the status of God as creator in Indian philosophy. However, I shall not take up this issue in the present article.[2]

II

When speaking of God, Śaṅkara sometimes refers to him as *saguṇa* Brahman (qualified Brahman), and sometimes as Īśvara (Lord). God is thus contrasted with *nirguṇa* Brahman, who has no properties whatsoever and cannot therefore be adequately described in language. The *saguṇa* Brahman or Īśvara serves a similar function to that of the demiurge in neo-Platonism. In this respect the Śaṅkaran God is viewed as directly related to the world, in other words, as *māyā*, and is therefore open to human understanding, both as the first cause of the world and as object of devotion. The Śankaran God is, as Deutsch puts it, "that about which something can be said."[3]

Śaṅkara not only holds that God is the creator of the world, but speaks of the specific way in which God carried out the act of creation. Śaṅkara gives two examples in order to clarify the nature of the process of creation:

> We see in everyday life that certain doings of princes or other men of high position who have no unfulfilled desires left have no reference to any extraneous purpose, but proceed from mere sportfulness as, for instance, their recreations in places of amusements. We further see that the process of inhalation and exhalation is going on without reference to any extraneous purpose, merely following the law of its own nature.

Śaṅkara then draws an analogy between these examples and God's creation of the world:

Analogously, the activity of the Lord also may be supposed to be mere sport (*līlā*), proceeding from its own nature, without reference to any purpose. For on the ground neither of reason nor of Scripture can we construe any other purpose of the Lord. Nor can his nature be questioned. Although the creation of this world appears to us a weighty and difficult undertaking, it is mere play to the lord, whose power is unlimited.[4]

Deutsch summarizes Śaṅkara's position with great clarity:

The concept of *līlā*, of play or sport, seeks to convey that Īśvara creates (sustains and destroys) worlds out of sheer joy of doing so. Answering to no compelling necessity, his creative act is simply a release of energy for its own sake. Creation is not informed by any selfish motive. It is spontaneous, without any purpose.[5]

At first glance the notion that the creation of the world took place without any purpose seems implausible, if not absurd. It would seem that there is no essential difference between the claim that the world was created in play or sport and the claim that the world exists out of sheer chance. Moreover, it would seem that describing God as creating the world in play or sport makes God a ridiculous figure and makes the very concept of God meaningless. In fact, the *līlā* theory of creation was criticized along these lines. For example, the Jainist school maintained that,

If you say that he created to no purpose, because it was his nature to do so, then God is pointless.
If he created in some kind of sport, it was the sport of a foolish child, leading to trouble.[6]

There is thus reason to believe that the *līlā* theory of creation cannot pass the test of common sense. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the theory can be given a plausible philosophical explication. To this end I propose that we examine the way in which Śaṅkara explains his theory, and, in particular, the arguments he adduces on its behalf.

III

When he states the arguments in favor of the *līlā* theory of creation, Śaṅkara stresses that in this matter, as in others, arguments are of two distinct types. Śaṅkara thus claims that "on the ground neither of reason nor of Scripture can we construe any other purpose of the Lord."[7] The *līlā* theory of creation is justified both by means of arguments based on reason and by means of those based on scripture. As it is well known, Śaṅkara regards *śabda* as a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), and in his works he takes pains to define explicitly the relations between this means of knowledge and the others—perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). Thus, for example, Śaṅkara regards *śabda* as completely independent of the other means of knowledge.[8] His view is that

śabda is not meant to provide information about things that can be known by the other means of knowledge. On the contrary, scripture deals only with those matters that, in principle, cannot be known by perception or inference.[9] Hence, should scripture be found to contain assertions that contradict those established by perception or inference, then the scriptural assertions are to be regarded as false.[10] The *śabda* is capable of supplementing knowledge obtained by the ordinary means, but not of overruling it.

We may therefore expect that in justifying his *līlā* theory of creation, Śaṅkara will have recourse to scripture only when the ordinary methods fail him. Later on, I shall deal in detail with the way in which Śaṅkara uses scripture in this connection. First, I shall consider the arguments based on reason that he adduces in favor of his theory.

A quick glance suffices to show that Śaṅkara does not attempt to justify his *līlā* theory in the abstract, but chooses instead to offer two common-sense examples, which are designed to show that not all of our everyday activities are directed toward achieving a specific extraneous end. Śaṅkara's first example is that of men of high position, "who have no unfulfilled desires" and therefore engage in games and recreations for their own sake. His second example is drawn from a different domain. Here Śaṅkara describes the activity of the respiratory system as autonomous, that is, as not serving any extraneous purpose, but instead which "merely follows the law of its own nature."

These two examples are meant to provide analogies to God's action in creating the world. However, it seems as though they are incompatible. The men of high position who play for their own amusement, without any extrinsic goal, do so on account of their position. Due to their high status, all the desires these men are capable of having have already been satisfied, and this is why they pass their time in recreation for its own sake. The privilege of engaging in games is available only when one's material and spiritual position allows. Thus if we are to regard God's creation of the world as analogous to this example, we must make a number of theological assumptions about God's nature, which entail that he is self-sufficient from the point of view of his desires. We must, in other words, presume that God can "do all things and that no purpose is beyond him" (Job 42:2). Furthermore, God must be regarded as not merely potentially but also actually having unlimited power. (Śaṅkara himself accepts this theological premise in the quotation just cited.)

If, therefore, we are to adopt the example of the men of high position as an analogy to God's creating the world in *līlā*, we must build into the example a number of theological assumptions that do not seem to be justified by reason. The presence of these assumptions appears to render the example itself unsuitable to its declared purpose, namely, to establish the *līlā* theory of creation by means of reason.

Śaṅkara's second example, that of the autonomous respiratory system, does not stand in need of such theological assumptions. Such assumptions would even

be out-of-place in the context of this example; the process of inhalation and exhalation is described as following its own intrinsic laws, and hence the concepts of 'motive' and 'desire' are inapplicable to it. The existence of breathing is a state-of-affairs just like any other, and a state-of-affairs, unlike an agent, has no options and does not proceed from motives. That is to say, the existence of a state-of-affairs, together with the laws that govern it, can be known—but a state-of-affairs cannot act.

We should not accuse Śaṅkara of overlooking the distinction between motivated action, on the one hand, and a given state-of-affairs, on the other. In his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* Śaṅkara takes pains to deliniate this distinction with great clarity. Śaṅkara writes:

An action is that which is enjoyed as being independent of the nature of existing things and dependent on the energy of some person's mind.... Knowledge, on the other hand, is the result of the different means of knowledge, and those have for their objects existing things; knowledge can therefore not be better made or not made or modified, but depends entirely on existing things, and not either on Vedic statements or on the mind of man.[11]

This citation gives us reason to believe that Śaṅkara was acquainted with the distinction between action and knowledge. In light of this distinction the examples of the men of high position and the respiratory system appears to be incompatible. Are we to conclude that Śaṅkara, when it came to grounding his theory of creation, ignored the very distinction between knowledge and action that he himself drew in several places throughout his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras*? I believe that this is not the case. More precisely, it seems to me that the two examples can be viewed as compatible within the framework of reason-arguments alone, without adopting theological assumptions about God's essence and nature. To this end I suggest that we interpret the first example, that of the men of high position, in light of the second, that of the respiratory system. In other words, the second example will be viewed as explicating the first.[12] In what follows I shall explain this suggestion in detail.

IV

My suggestion is that we interpret the first example not in terms of the psychology of the men of high position who have no unfulfilled desires, but rather in terms of what it is that constitutes the domain of their activity. In other words, we must understand what their description of *playing a game* amounts to.

In contemporary philosophy of language, the game is often seen as a paradigm case of what is usually termed a system of constitutive rules, contrasted with a system of regulative rules. Wittgenstein made a major contribution towards the understanding of this distinction and of its importance, although, to the best of my knowledge, he nowhere uses the terms "constitutive" and "regulative." Searle later drew the express distinction between the two kinds of rules:

Regulative rules regulate a pre-existing activity whose existence is logically independent of the rules. Constitutive rules constitue (and also regulate) an activity the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules.[13]

On Searle's view, the import of this distinction is that behavior or activity which is in accordance with regulative rules could be characterized or described even in the absence of the rules. By contrast, behavior or activity which is in accordance with constitutive rules receives a description or specification which it could not receive if the rules did not exist. Accordingly, Searle bases his definition on the distinction between activity that is *not* in principle dependent on its rules and activity that *is* in principle dependent on its rules. Wittgenstein, for his part, stresses a different aspect of the distinction, which I regard as more important in the present context: the distinction between rules whose activity is a means to an external goal and rules which themselves constitute the end of their activity. He writes:

Why don't I call cookery rules arbitrary, and why am I tempted to call the rules of grammar arbitrary? Because 'cookery' is defined by its end, whereas 'speaking' is not.... You cook badly if you are guided in your cooking by rules other than the right ones; but if you follow other rules than those of chess you are *playing another game*.[14] (italics mine).

If we adopt these definitions of constitutive rules, and apply them to Śaṅkara's example of the men of high position, we shall be in a position to see that this example is in fact compatible with the second one, that of the autonomous respiratory system. Both are examples of activity that is not a means to some external purpose. In both examples, the rules do not regulate an activity independent of them; rather, the rules *constitute* the activity; that is, the end of the activity is determined by the rules. In the first example, the rules of the game serve to define its end. Thus, any violation of these rules would be a final departure from the game, or in certain other cases, would establish a new game. Similarly, in the second example, the rules according to which the respiratory system operates establish the 'purpose' of the system (providing adequate respiration in a given time, for instance). It is hardly necessary to emphasize that in the case of the respiratory system we can talk of the existence of constitutive rules only figuratively. The rules that govern the autonomous activity or respiration are rules of nature, whereas the distinction between regulative and constitutive rules refers to institutions whose aim is to define, describe, and sometimes regulate human activities. Nevertheless, the autonomous model of the respiratory system is used by Śaṅkara as an example of any activity that is not viewed as a means for an end but as an end in itself. In this light we may understand why Śaṅkara stressed in both examples that their activities, the playing of games and breathing, take place "without reference to any extraneous purpose."

I should like to note at this point that I do not claim that Śaṅkara himself, either explicitly or implicitly, distinguished between regulative and constitutive rules. My claim is simply that this distinction represents a legitimate interpre-

tation of his *līlā* theory of creation. The distinction enables us to see Śaṅkara's two examples as compatible.

V

The arguments of reason that Śaṅkara adduces thus take the form of an example of a system of constitutive rules. In light of this example we may see the creation of the world as an activity that proceeds in accordance with constitutive rules.

The constitutive description of creation still required to be explained. As mentioned earlier, creation is not to be thought of as a means to any extraneous purpose. Accordingly, the world as the product of creation is to be regarded as 'given' within the constitutive system. The import of the claim that the world is 'given' within the system is far-reaching. Consider for a moment the game of chess. We could scarcely imagine a chess player seriously maintaining that the rules of the rook's and bishop's moves signify some predetermined cosmic harmony, whereas the rules of the knight's move manifest its opposite, absolute chaos. Such a claim could perhaps be defended by an eccentric philosopher, but it is clear that from the point of view of the rules of chess it is absolutely meaningless. And should our eccentric philosopher attempt to amend the rules of the game of chess so as to make them conform to his theory, he would merely succeed in replacing chess with a different game. Likewise, viewing the world as created in accordance with constitutive rules bars us from regarding it as an instrument or means for achieving an external purpose and blocks at the outset any attempt to give the world a metaphysical description. If the world is a 'given' of a system of rules in accordance with which it was created, then any attempt to ascribe to it some mysterious or sublime significance as its end will either be beside the point or else distort the notion of 'constitutive rules'. Epistemologically speaking, the world is value-free and lacks any transcendent meaning. Thus, the *līlā* theory implies that to search for transcendent-metaphysical meaning would be to abandon the 'epistemological game' in favor of another game, that of the knowledge of Brahman. The latter game cancels the former. Both games cannot be played simultaneously. In this respect the constitutive theory of creation fits in well with Śaṅkara's general view that the world of phenomena is characterized as *māyā*. In the epistemological context, the significance of *māyā* is that the empirical world is to be seen as 'given'. In its metaphysical meaning, *māyā* is illusion and therefore requires us to understand that all the rules by which we grasp the illusory would are themselves part of the illusion.[15]

However, the *līlā* theory of creation goes further than just regarding the world as 'given'. Not only does it regard the action by which God created the universe as bound by constitutive rule—it also regards the creator-God himself as so bound. This latter position is a bold one, certainly from the point of view of Western theologies, but it is not completely foreign to the world of Indian theology. (Intimations of it can be found, for example, in the polytheistic conception of the Vedas.) The relation between God and the world he created in

accordance with a system of rules is not akin to the relation between a board-game and its inventor, but more like the relation between the board-game and one who is formally a player in it—a status the player holds by virtue of the rules of the game themselves. In other words, the Śaṅkaran God is totally bound by the constitutive rules of creation.

This latter position blocks theological speculations to the effect that God's being the creator of the universe is only *one* of his many modes or properties. If the rules in accordance with which the act of creation proceeds are in fact constitutive ones, then they constitute both the relevant sphere of activity and the actions of he who engages in it. This means that these rules constitute God's status. Hence God must be thought of as having no status outside of his status as creator. We should not be surprised, therefore, that Śaṅkara absolves God of all responsibility for the inequality, evil, and cruelty in the world—for these do not stem from his constitutively determined status as creator. Śaṅkara writes:

If the Lord on his own account, without any extraneous regards, produced this unequal creation, he would expose himself to blame; but the fact is, that in creating he is bound by certain regards, i.e., he has to look to merit and demerit.... Hence the Lord, being bound by regards, cannot be reproached with inequality of dispensation and cruelty.[16]

The classical problem of evil, which disturbed the slumber of Western philosophers and theologians alike, is thus solved simply and unequivocally through the use of the notion of constitutive rules. Within the limitations of this article I cannot take up the question of the specific characterization of these rules. Suffice it to say that the passage just quoted indicates that they are directly related to the law of karman.[17] With regard to the problem of evil, it is clear that these constitutive rules do not allow us to raise the question of God's moral responsiblity. God is defined by the rules in a way that absolves him of formal responsibility for the existence of evil in the world; by his very (constitutive) nature he is defined as being "*bound by certain regards*"—which are the rules themselves, that define him, determine his status, and constitute his activity.

VI

Before us, then, we have a proposal that a central religious concept—that of creation—can be explained in terms of constitutive rules. Since in this article I am interested only in Śaṅkara's views, I shall not take up various attempts made in India and elsewhere to characterize other religious concepts constitutively; nor shall I deal with the general philosophical implications of such characterization. However, there are two objections to the *līlā* theory of creation that Śaṅkara himself considers; I think we should follow his example.

Both objections seek, each in its own way, to undermine the definition of the act of creation as lacking any extraneous purpose. The first objection is based on empirical grounds and, accordingly, I shall call it the empirical objection. It casts doubt on the possibility that there actually is an activity without any extraneous

purpose. In other words, the objection holds that a system of constitutive rules must remain a theoretical entity or an abstract ideal, because in ordinary life it is difficult to find any activity that does not serve an extraneous purpose—either directly or indirectly, expressly or implicitly. That is, activities such as those we take to be 'play' do, in fact, have clear social and psychological purposes, even though these purposes may not be immediately obvious. To conclude, even if a system of rules may seem at first to be constitutive of its activity, closer examination will reveal the rules to be in fact regulative of an activity that is logically independent of the rules.

The second objection is more radical and perhaps more serious. I shall call it the conceptual objection. It seeks not only to question the possibility of actually engaging in such activity, but to deny the very meaning of constitutive activity. One of the commonsense ways to distinguish between rational and irrational activities is to stipulate that rational activities involve selecting the most efficient means to some end or other. The efficiency of the means is, on this account, at least a necessary condition of the rationality of the activity. Consequently, a rule or norm is seen as rational if it properly directs the execution of actions for the sake of meeting a need, desire, or goal. If, instead, we regard the activity in question not as a means to some end, but as as end in itself, we thereby regard it as irrational: if the activity is its own end, it thereby becomes impossible to justify it. Thus, for example, the answer to the question 'Why play chess?' is not contained in the rules of the game, either explicitly or implicitly. If we wish to answer this question, we must regard the rules of chess as a constitutive subsystem embedded in a wider system of norms, within which the rules of chess are seen as regulative. (For example, we might say that chess is a socially valuable channel for diverting aggression, a means of honing the intellect, and so forth.) And if we reject the utilitarian justification, then—so the objection concludes—we must regard the activity in question as pointless. Since, on the constitutive view, the questions 'Why play?' or 'Why create?' are ruled illegitimate, these activities are held to be intrinsically meaningless.

Śaṅkara presents these objections and rejects both of them on the basis of scripture. First, he presents and rejects the empirical objection:

> If in ordinary life we might possibly by close scrutiny detect some subtle motive, even for sportful action, we cannot do so with regard to the actions of the Lord, all whose wishes are fulfilled, as Scripture says.[18]

He then goes on to dispose of the conceptual objection, also on the basis of scripture:

> Nor can it be said that he [the Lord] either does not act or acts like a senseless person; for Scripture affirms the fact of the creation on the one hand, and the Lord's omniscience on the other hand.[19]

As I maintain above (in section III), Śaṅkara has recourse to arguments drawn from scripture only as a supplement to arguments from reason, that is, only on

those matters that cannot, in principle, be known by the ordinary means of knowledge. In what follows I shall argue that it is no accident that Śaṅkara appeals to scripture in order to rebut the empirical and conceptual objections. In other words, Śaṅkara's reliance on scripture is necessitated by the very definition of creation and creator as bound by constitutive rules.

I first consider the empirical objection. As I maintain earlier, the question of an agent's personal ends or motives is irrelevant when it comes to systems of rules that constitute spheres of human activity. Whether an agent has his own particular psychological motivation, or his own reasons, for following a system of constitutive rules; whether the agent's motives are discernible or indiscernible—all this has no bearing on the possibility of establishing the rules. In order to give a general philosophical account of constitutive rules, there is no need to enter into men's overt or concealed psychological motives. The need to assume that in the 'game' of creation the player—God—has no motive whatsoever, does not follow from the general characterization of constitutive rules. Therefore, there is no need to supply arguments of reason to free God from being bound by some ulterior motive.

However, despite the fact that the question of the hidden motive is not philosophically important, it is *theologically* pressing and even necessary. Here we have a paradigm case of the cleavage between philosophical and theological approaches. If we face the philosopher who accepts the constitutive rule analogy with the possibility that the participants in a rule-governed game have some hidden motive for engaging in it, the philosopher need do no more than shrug his shoulders in indifference. Furthermore, if we prove to him in any particular case the ulterior motives are inherent in the system of rules, our philosopher will simply declare the system to be a regulative one, and look for an example elsewhere. The theologian's position is entirely different. The theologian who holds to the constitutive rule theory of creation cannot remain indifferent to the possibility that God's activity in creating the universe is 'contaminated' by a (divine) extraneous motive, for this would reduce God's act of creation to a means, and not an end in itself. Of course, the theologian has nowhere else to turn for examples, because this particular example—creation—is the object of his inquiry. The philosopher inquires into the general formal characteristics of systems of constitutive rules, whereas the theologian is involved in defending a *specific* constitutive system—that of creation. The latter must, therefore, find a theological guarantee of the constitutive purity of God's activity. Scripture can provide such a theological guarantee, and it is on the basis of scripture that the conclusion that God's motiveless creation of the universe is established.

Śaṅkara also presses scripture into service in rebutting the second, conceptual objection to his *līlā* theory. It should be recalled that this objection holds that regarding creation as *līlā* means making of God a "senseless person." This objection, in various forms, is popular among those who do not regard religion

or a part of it as defined by constitutive rules. Phillips, for example, quotes an argument of this sort against his Wittgensteinian-inspired view of religion as a distinctive kind of language game. As Phillips puts it, "if religious beliefs are isolated, self-sufficient language-games, it becomes difficult to explain why people should cherish religious beliefs in the way they do." Religious activities, then, are either senseless or mere "hobbies or esoteric games" in which "men occupy themselves at week-ends" and which have only "little significance outside the internal formalities of their activities."[20] In another context Flew ridicules religious activities, seen in the light of this view, as "fraudulent, or merely silly."[21] You may recall that the Jainists levelled a similar attack against Śaṅkara, claiming that the God who creates the world in *līlā* is pointless, or at best akin to a foolish child.

Why play the game? How can participation in a system of rules that has no extraneous purpose be justified? Śaṅkara gives no answer, based on reason, to these questions, and instead relies on scripture to reach his conclusion that God is not a senseless person. The fact that Śaṅkara abjures rational arguments, relying instead on the authority of scripture seems significant to me. I argued earlier that it is a matter of philosophical indifference whether any constitutive system of rules actually exists in everyday life. But when it comes to meeting the conceptual objection, the situation is completely different. Here, the philosopher finds no way whatsoever of answering the objection. The demand that some further justification be given for engaging in systems of constitutive rules is, as it were, pushing at an open door. Human nature inclines us to search constantly for reasons and justifications for our beliefs, and, as Wittgenstein correctly maintains, we have great difficulty in realizing the groundlessness of our believing.[22] This usual difficulty is compounded when we are faced with a system of rules that constitutes an end in itself. By its very nature a system of constitutive rules cannot have a justification, reason, or motive external to the rules themselves. Chess, defined as a system of constitutive rules, has in these rules no justification. Similarly, God's creation of the world in *līlā* cannot be given an extrinsic justification.

Does this mean that the constitutive creator is "pointless," a "senseless person," or a "foolish child"? No philosophical answer to these questions is possible, for anyone who asks them is guilty of a kind of 'category mistake'. Anyone who insists on pressing these questions shows thereby that he has not grasped the distinction between constitutive and regulative rules. Consequently, if the need arises to rebut the charge of God's being foolish or meaningless, this can only be done by appealing to an infallible religious source. In fact, when faced with this charge Śaṅkara turns to scripture in defense of his *līlā* theory. It is difficult not to regard Śaṅkara's proposal without a certain measure of irony: whoever does not accept the philosophical implications of defining some activity constitutively, and looks instead for an extrinsic justification, can appeal to what

may be called 'justification by authority'. If a constitutive system of rules cannot justify itself in the eyes of one who is a participant in it,—then scripture will do so in its stead.

Thus scripture fulfills the role that Śaṅkara assigns to it. Scripture does not take a stand on all those matters that can be defined, espoused, described, and explicated by reason; instead, it steps in to fill the gap left by reason's inherent limitations. And thus, while the *līlā* theory of creation is rationally based on the philosophical distinction between constitutive and regulative rules, the theory is justified, in the final analysis, by the religious authority of scripture.

NOTES

1. For a recent philosophical discussion of theistic theories of creation see, for example, Hugo Menyell, "The Intelligibility of the Universe," in *Reason and Religion*, ed. S. C. Brown (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 23–43. On the problematic definition of God in traditional natural theologies of theistic religions see Anthony Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

2. On the status of God as creator in Indian philosophy, see, for example, A. Kunst, "Man—The Creator," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 4 (1976): 51–68.

3. Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu, Hawaii: East-West Center Press, 1969), p. 12.

4. George Thibaut, trans., *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana, with the Commentary by Śaṅkara, II.1.33* (Oxford: The Clarenden Press, 1890), part I, pp. 356–357.

5. Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta*, pp. 38–39.

6. "*Mahāpurāṇa, IV. 25–26*," in *Sources of Indian Tradition*, ed. Wm. Theodore De Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), vol. 1, p. 77.

7. Thibaut, *The Vedānta Sūtras*.

8. See, for example, Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtras I.1.4, II.1.2*.

9. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā, II.32*.

10. See Śaṅkara's commentary on *Bṛihādaraṇyaka Upaniṣad, II.1.20*.

11. Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtra I.1.4* in Thibaut, *The Vedānta Sūtras*, pp. 34–35. See also Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtra I.1.2*, in which he distinguishes, in a similar way, between human action characterized by options, and the nature of a substance for which "no option is possible."

13. John R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 34.

14. L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), par. 320. Wittgenstein's position on games is that they have no common characteristic, but are related by 'family resemblance'. (See, for example, *Philosophical Investigation*, I,65.) This notwithstanding, he regards his favorite example, that of chess, to be a game defined by its rules. (See, for example, *Wittgenstein's Lectures; Cambridge, 1932–1935*, par. 2ff.) On Wittgenstein's definition of constitutive rules and the development of this notion in his later philosophy, see, for example, M. Black, "Lebensform and Sprachspiel in Wittgenstein's Later Work," in *Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought*, ed. E. Leinfeller at al. (Vienna, 1978), pp. 325–331. The distinction between constitutive and regulative rules has proved fruitful in contemporary philosophy of language. Various philosophers have, nonetheless, attacked it. (See, for example, Joseph Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms* [London, 1975], p. 108ff).

15. On the concept of *māyā* in *Advaita Vedānta*, and on the distinction between Śaṅkara's metaphysics and epistemology, see Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta*, pp. 28–34.

16. Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtra II.1.34*, Thibaut, *The Vedānta Sūtras* part I, pp. 358–359.

17. On the law of *karman* in India see, for example, W. D. O'Flaherty, ed., *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1980), and especially Karl H. Potter, "The Karma Theory and Its Interpretation in Some Indian Philosophical Systems," pp. 241–267.

18. Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtra II.1.33*, Thibaut, *The Vedānta* Sūtras, part I, p. 357.

19. Ibid.

20. D. Z. Phillips, "Religious Beliefs and Language Games," in *Faith and Philosophical Inquiry* (London, 1970), p. 78.

21. A. Flew, "Theology and Falsification" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed., A. Flew and A. MacIntyre (London, 1955), p. 108.

22. L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), par. 166.

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UNITY AND CONTRADICTION: SOME ARGUMENTS IN UTPALADEVA AND ABHINAVAGUPTA FOR THE EVIDENCE OF THE SELF AS ŚIVA

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Within the complex we call Kāśmīr Śaivism, the School of Recognition *(pratyabhijñā)* is, philosophically, the most articulate. Especially Utpaladeva (first half of the tenth century)[1] and the many-sided Abhinavagupta (around 950–1015)[2] argumentatively worked out the themes of the school, partly in defense against the Buddhism flourishing at that time in Kaśmīr.

Its doctrine of Unity, in which the unique, true, all-embracing Self *(ātman)* is identical with the God Śiva, is a characteristic of the Pratyabhijñā school. We have "forgotten" that Śiva is our true Self and the true Self of all reality. In Recognition we realize anew this true Self, to be freed from the cycle of births *(saṃsāra).*

Here, in contrast with Advaita Vedānta, the Self, as identical with Śiva, is considered and experienced as creative, as the subject of actions. The plurality and dynamism of phenomena also have some reality, though inside Śiva. The dispute with Buddhists, who do not accept an imperishable Self, gives the Ātman schools a chance to articulate the intellectual aspects of their way to meditative liberation. In fact, the Pratyabhijñā school is, in its own way, able to take seriously the current Buddhist emphasis on plurality and the impermanence of the world of phenomena, thus enabling a modern American scholar like Harvey Paul Alper (1979) to interpret Abhinavagupta's philosophy in the line of a *process understanding.* Other scholars, however, like Bettina Bäumer (1978), place more emphasis on the nondualism in his doctrine.

The first two parts of this article interpret, respectively, the arguments that Utpaladeva (first part) and Abhinavagupta (second part) give in some of their texts for the evidence of a Self that is one and the same as *the Great Lord* Śiva. These arguments clarify the view of these authors on the connection between fundamental unity and self-contradictory plural dynamism. Against this background, the contradictory relationship between the limited individual subject and the recognition of the true Self is shown in the third part. Finally, a further interpretation is attempted and some remarks are made concerning practical meditation and the theoretical presuppositions of this way of thinking, in order to find starting points for a comparison with Western philosophy (fourth part).

The texts of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta discussed here are interconnected. Utpaladeva's text is found at the beginning of his *Verses on the Recognition of the Lord (Īsvara-Pratyabhijñā-Kārikāḥ*—hereafter *IPK).* Abhinavagupta's text is a part of his commentary on it *(Īśvara-*

Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśinī—hereafter IPV). In their compactness these texts provide good access to our theme.

There is one thing that should be noted in advance. We are dealing here primarily with intellectual articulation and argument. But Recognition goes further than that. Often it is described as an astonishing *Aha*-experience. Yet intellectual articulation and argument get an important place and are considered not merely as an exterior preparation for it.[3]

Utpaladeva: The Great Lord as the Irrefutable and Unprovable Self *(IPK* 1.2)

The role of argumentation with regard to the Self and its identity with Śiva is already visible in the second verse of the first chapter of Utpaladeva's *Verses on the Recognition of the Lord (IPK).* When we follow the (German) translation by the famous Vienna scholar Erich Frauwallner, it reads:

> Who, being not a fool, might try to deny or to prove the Actor and Knower, the own Self, given from the beginning, the highest Lord?[4]

This translation emphasizes a sort of primary evidence of the Great Lord *(Maheśvara)* Śiva in immediate connection with a primary evidence of the Self as the subject of all activity and knowledge. For the own Self is *given from the beginning,* 'always already' evident. The rhetorical question suggests that denying the Great Lord would be as foolish as denying your own Self, which is the subject of activity and knowledge. For the same reason, also proving the Great Lord as well as your own Self is foolish. A proof of the own Self is superfluous, as a proof of the Great Lord would be, because he is identical with the true self.

And yet there are—as Utpaladeva knows—people who, in their folly, deny their own Self and the Great Lord, like certain Buddhists,[5] and there are people like the Vaiśeṣikas, who are foolish enough to try to prove the ever evident Lord.[6] These types of folly are rooted in a forgetfulness that is removed by Recognition. But will the fools be convinced by Utpaladeva's verse, and will it bring them to Recognition? One could argue that the verse is simply a thesis. *Qui potest capere capiat* ("He that is able to receive it, let him receive it"—Matt. 19:12). But it is not that simple. A closer look reveals an implicit argumentation in the verse. This argumentation shows that these types of folly are not simply a matter of forgetfulness: the position of the fool contains in itself an *inner* contradiction.

One can trace this argumentation by realizing that the Sanskrit term *ajaḍa,* translated here as "not a fool," also has another meaning, which Utpaladeva probably alludes to and which doesn't come out in Frauwallner's translation. *Ajaḍa* also means "not unintelligent," or "intelligent," "endowed with intellect." In this way justice is done to the

double meaning contained in the verse: which intelligent being would be so insipid or foolish as to refute[7] or to prove his own Self? Every intelligent being has some consciousness of itself, and every act of refutation or of proving presupposes an intelligent Self which has this consciousness of itself. Thus a refutation of the own Self is self-contradictory. Here the content of the refutational act contradicts a presupposition of the act. Abhinavagupta confirms this interpretation by stating in his commentary[8] that if one could take this refutation of an intelligent Self seriously, one would oneself be a nonintelligent being, and thus be unable to refute anything whatsoever. On the other hand, trying to prove the own Self is also self-contradictory. In the same context, Abhinavagupta argues in relation to a proof of the Self just as he does in relation to a refutation of it. The act of proving presupposes an intelligent Self. He shows that, in case of the own Self, proving as a way of making something shine for the first time is impossible, because a Self which does not shine would not be an intelligent Self and would thus be unable to prove anything at all. Here two presuppositions of the proving act are mutually contradictory: one presupposition of the act's content and one of the act itself.

Is this argumentation sufficient to convince an opponent who denies the Self? It would only convince someone who shares with Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta certain ideas about the conditions of possibility of mental acts. First, mental acts are only possible if supported by a mental, intelligent subject. And secondly, such an intelligent subject is *always already* evident in itself, because otherwise it would be a nonintelligent being. A Buddhist would not agree with the first presupposition; a follower of Vaiśeṣika philosophy would not agree with the second. Utpaladeva's and Abhinavagupta's so-called transcendental argumentations deal with the irrefutability and unprovability of a subject only as understood in a specific way. Therefore, they may be considered as making explicit a certain understanding of the phenomenon of self-consciousness. They show the unavoidable evidence of a subject thus understood. But at the same time they confront us with the problem of how the earlier mentioned forms of folly are possible, as far as they are related to the own Self. We will have to come back to this point.

The reader may have noticed that the implied argumentative aspect of the verse initially deals with the Self and not so much with the Great Lord Śiva. In the verse, the Great Lord is simply, without any argumentation, identified with the own Self. The reflexive argumentation implied in the verse refers to the subject or Self as an *always already* self-evident presupposition of every mental act. Is this Self here used simply as a means to show the immediate evidence of the Great Lord? Or is it indicated in this way, though not by argument, that the Self, precisely *as a Self*, is identical with the Great Lord? This would imply that my acts are

only possible as acts of the Great Lord, just as they are only possible as acts of an intelligent, self-conscious Self. It would even mean that, whenever I am active as an *actor* or a *knower* and am therein 'always already' self-conscious, I am also active as Great Lord and and have 'always already' some consciousness of the Great Lord as my true Self and as the true actor and knower. Therefore, also in the acts of refuting or proving, my 'always already' evident nature as the Great Lord would express itself.

According to Abhinavagupta's interpretation in *IPV* 1.1.2, the verse identifies the Great Lord with the true self-evident Self indeed. Later on we will see how he argues for that identification. At this moment, it is important to notice that the Great Lord is not primarily spoken of in relation to mindless objects, but to the own Self.

Utpaladeva did not prove the primordial evidence of the Self and much less the identity of the Self with the Great Lord. If possible at all, this is not possible in one small verse. But if our interpretation is correct, which seems here together with Abhinavagupta an implicit reflexive argumentation, the function of the verse can be formulated as follows. Utpaladeva did not only argue implicitly for the irrefutability and unprovability of the Self, but in arguing this way, he also intends to have *shown* what one already knows because it is the most obvious. It is so obvious that it is the most easily forgotten, because, in current consciousness, one is *eccentric* toward oneself. Therefore Utpaladeva's verse speaks about this Self and this Great Lord in the third person. Thus thought moves here between identity and opposition. To the current consciousness the object of mental acts lies in the foreground; and the acts and their subject are so *self-evident* that they are easily *forgotten.* This explains the impression that the acts and their subject have to be proved as if they were objects—and that they even could be refuted as such.

It is true that a certain opposition toward one's own acts and one's own Self might be necessary because of the eccentricity of human consciousness; but fundamentally the acts as supported by the self, in Utpaladeva's and Abhinavagupta's views, are self-evident and require only a *recognition* of their being supported by the Self, namely the Great Lord. The linguistic expressions and the quasi-objectifying opposition point toward one's *own* true Self as the actor and knower. In connection with that, the implicit argumentations are of a reflexive nature. In their reflexive pointing toward the own act and the own subject, they are able to contribute to Recognition in the full sense of the word. For the School of Pratyabhijñā, the reflexive argumentation is not identical with full Recognition, but it might be a first step toward it. The reflexive argumentation is of a special character: in a certain way it makes explicit what one knows 'always already' about oneself, and brings that 'nearer'. What one

is 'always already' *seeing*, is now also *noticed*.[9] The beginning of Recognition is in this case a way of becoming conscious of one's own Self as realizing itself in its own acts. In order to *notice* the own Self as Śiva, an explicit argumentation does not seem always necessary. Yet one could hardly deny that, implicitly, a certain interpretation of self-consciousness will always play a part. Otherwise, how could the Buddhists understand self-consciousness in a radically different way?

Abhinavagupta: Why Knower and Great Lord Are Not to be Distinguished *(IPV* 1.1.2)

In the first section, we attempted to make explicit what—if one takes Utpaladeva seriously—the argumentative implications of his rhetorical question are in verse *IPK* 1.2, and to present a clearer view of his ideas about the Self and the Great Lord. It is obvious, however, that additional clarification and argument will be needed, especially as regards the nature of the intelligent Self and its identity with the Great Lord. Therefore it is not surprising that about half of Abhinavagupta's commentary on this verse *(IPV* 1.1.2) deals with the word *who (kaḥ)*, which indicates the rhetorical question and asks for the subject.

Abhinavagupta's explanation of the word *who* in *IPV* 1.1.2 consists of two parts:

(1) an analysis of the conditions on which a knower *(pramātṛ)* can be a knower, namely that the knower should be (a) self-shining *(svaprakāśa)*, and (b) independent, free *(svatantra)*; and (2) a discussion of the question of why such a knower is not to be distinguished from the Lord.

1. Abhinavagupta begins his commentary of the verse *IPK* 1.2 with an analysis of the conditions of possibility of subjectivity: of what nature should the knower *(pramātṛ)* be in order to be able to do what the opponent intends, that is, to prove or to refute.[10] The author presents the phenomenon of proving and shows that it would not be possible if the knower lacks certain qualifications. We quote Abhinavagupta's compact text:[11]

> Here, who *(kaḥ)* would, in regard to what kind of Lord (Īśvara) and by what kind of means of knowledge *(pramāṇa)*, produce a proof *(siddhi)* characterized by the knowledge "He is," or a refutation *(niṣedha)*, characterized by the knowledge "He is not"? If [one would answer]: "A knower *(pramātṛ)*," what is that?
>
> A nonintelligent *(jaḍa)* one, like a body and so on, or someone different from that—who is to be indicated with the word *self (ātman)?* And is this one essentially self-shining *(svaprakāśa)* or not? If [the answer would be]: "A nonintelligent one, like a body and so on," which evidence *(siddhi)*[12] could he, being not evident *(siddha)* in himself, bring about in regard to something else?[13] Even a self, which is not self-shining, is nonintelligent [and] thus has equal property.

If [one says]: "He is essentially self-shining," in which kind of own form does he appear? If he appears in the form only of completely fixed consciousness, then the separation of [moments of] consciousness and the unification of the separated [moments of consciousness] by inner connection would be impossible.

Therefore firstly he appears as essentially free *(svatantra)* and self-shining *(svaprakāśa)*.

The text presents three dichotomies, of which the first member is rejected each time: "nonintelligent" versus "self,"[14] "not self-shining" versus "essentially self-shining,"[15] and "appears in the form only of completely fixed consciousness" versus "appears as essentially free (and self-shining)."[16] Two arguments are given to decide between the members of the dichotomies.

(a) The first argument centers on the *knower* as *self-shining*. The two first dichotomies are treated together. In both cases the first member is rejected by the argument ". . . which evidence could it, being not evident in itself, bring about in regard to something else?"[17] Both a nonintelligent *(jaḍa)* knower and a knower who, though indicated as a self *(ātman)*, is not self-shining are unable to prove something, that is, to bring about evidence in regard to it, precisely because they are both not self-shining. Only a self that is self-shining, that is, evident in itself, can also make something else evident. Abhinavagupta understands the knowledge produced by a proof as a way of illuminating something that is not self-shining. And this is done by a source of light, which not only shines from itself, but also illuminates itself, knows itself. According to him, only a knower gifted with self-consciousness is able to know the things not gifted with it. The way the metaphor of light functions here indicates that the primary form of knowledge is self-knowledge. Object-knowledge, the shining of the object through borrowed light, seems to be a derivative form of knowledge.

One could consider the foregoing as a conception (not shared, for example, by Indian Buddhists) of a continuity in self-consciousness in contrast with a discontinuity in the knowledge of objects. One could even understand it as an attempt to point at the initiative of the knower in the act of knowing and at the dependence of the different objects on the active and selective attention of the knower. But this brings us closer to a central aspect of Abhinavagupta's second argument.

One of the presuppositions of Utpaladeva's implicit argumentation in *IPK* 1.2 is that an intelligent subject should be *always already* evident-in-itself. In fact, this presupposition is elucidated in Abhinavagupta's first argument by a description of the act of proving with the help of the metaphor of light.

(b) The second argument deals with the *knower* as the source of

dynamism of consciousness. The argument refers to the third dichotomy. This dichotomy is presented in the question of whether the knower who, according to the first argument, is an essentially self-shining self "appears in the form only of completely fixed consciousness" or "as essentially independent/free."[18] Here the first member is rejected by the argument "If he [i.e., the knower as a Self] appears in the form only of completely fixed consciousness, then the separation of [moments of] consciousness and the unification of the separated [moments of consciousness] by inner connection would be impossible."[19] One may assume that the phenomena of knowledge described here are not impossible, when the knower is independent/free *(svatantra)*.[20] But which phenomena in the sphere of knowledge could be meant here?

It seems obvious to interpret the described phenomena of knowledge in the line of the first argument as referring to the procedure of proof—especially the way by which different moments of consciousness are brought to a unity through interconnection could be found in the act of proving. In this context one could refer to a later passage in *IPV* (1.7.4), where Abhinavagupta mentions five moments of consciousness, consisting of perception and nonperception, that make the inference of a causal relation possible. For that purpose the five moments of consciousness are interconnected by the knower *(pramātṛ)* through the knower's independent freedom *(svatantratā)*.[21] In this way the unificatory side of the mentioned phenomenon of knowledge could be understood. But then it is not yet clear why Abhinavagupta speaks, in *IPV* 1.1.2, of an *"inner connection"*[22] nor how we can understand what he says there about "the separation of [moments of] consciousness."

The meaning of "inner connection" can be clarified when we consider the phenomenon of memory and the way Utpaladeva (and Abhinavagupta) understand it. In *IPK* I.8–11 and 17–31, Utpaladeva is having a dispute about memory with a Buddhist opponent.[23] He argues that in the Buddhist conception of momentariness,[24] a real act of memory would be impossible, because the moments of knowledge are locked up in themselves. The true interconnection in memory of moments of knowledge, which are separate in time, would be impossible if there would not be the One Great Lord, who, as an active subject, embraces all these moments of knowledge *(IPK* I.23) and connects them *from inside*. We cannot discuss here the way Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta work out the role of the Great Lord in memory. This much is clear: that in the phenomenon of memory a faculty of the knower is at work, by which the knower is able to establish an inner connection between separate moments of consciousness. That the knower has therein a certain freedom *(svātantrya)* is also clear, although a *total* freedom of memory could hardly be ascribed to the usual human knower.

Here we see a problem with Abhinavagupta's second argument in

IPV 1.1.2. Because he seems to ascend in his argumentation to a superhuman degree of freedom for the knower, one should ask to what extent the phenomena he appeals to are recognizable in current experience. For the present, we can say that one cannot deny the knower a certain form of creative freedom to connect separate moments of consciousness, insofar as he is able, for example, to direct consciously and freely his attention to certain past acts of knowing.

But how about the other aspect of the phenomenon that the second argument appeals to—"the separation of [moments of] consciousness"? Does this not presuppose a previous unity of these moments of consciousness? And is such a unity recognizable in a phenomenal setting? In fact Abhinavagupta presupposes here a previous undivided unity of the moments of consciousness. This becomes clear when he gives in the same commentary *(IPV* 1.1.2) a definition of freedom *(svātantrya):* "separating the *nonseparate* and undoing by inner connection the separation of what is separated. . . ."[25] How Abhinavagupta conceives this can be seen in his commentary on Utpaladeva's dispute with a Buddhist on memory in *IPK* 1.8–11 and 17–31, especially in the commentary on *IPK* 1.23 *(IPV* 1.3.7). There he mentions a power of delimitation *(apohana-śakti),* which accomplishes the following: "Whatever is made to shine, is separated from consciousness, and consciousness [is separated] from it, and one consciousness [is separated] from another, and the one object of consciousness [is separated] from the other object of consciousness."[26] This quotation again exceeds the framework found until now in Abhinavagupta's second argument in *IPV* 1.1.2. A previous undividedness is presupposed here, not only of moments of consciousness, but also of the objects of consciousness among each other and even of consciousness and its objects. This is partly because, in the beginning of his commentary on *IPK* 1.23 and referring to that verse, Abhinavagupta has argued that consciousness embraces all objects of knowledge. In his commentary on *IPK* 1.2, he will make this step later on, when he comes to the explicit identification of the knower with the Great Lord (see below, [2]).

Abhinavagupta does not seem to go so far in his (second) argument for the independent freedom of the knower. The argument just points towards a previous undifferentiated totality of consciousness, which is divided by the knower into separate moments of consciousness. Part of this is recognizable as a phenomenon: a certain freedom and originality of the knower in performing certain acts and in determining their nature, like acts of perception, of thinking, of memory, and so on. But here one can hardly speak of a complete self-determination. Nor does a previous totality of consciousness, from which the separate acts of consciousness emerge, seem to be immediately apparent. Although the second argument links up with ordinary phenomena in the field of knowledge, its

conclusion about the nature of the knower seems to exceed human proportions to such an extent that one should ask if the phenomena are not seen here in a superhuman perspective or even within a framework that is already defined by the final conclusion: the identification of the knower with the Great Lord.

But there might be a more *phenomenal* access to the mentioned separation of moments of consciousness from an undifferentiated consciousness.[27] In the meditative experience, we find consciousness returning to silence and withdrawing, as it were, from its current identification with its acts. For a time, the acts could even drop off. Out of such silence we can experience how the different acts of consciousness *emerge*. The Buddhists also are acquainted with such an experience, but they do not interpret this *emerging* as performed by an embracing whole of consciousness, which could be defined as a *Self.* They see it as determined by karmic causality. In the Pratyabhijñā school, however, the idea of an embracing, and in itself undifferentiated, *space*[28] of consciousness is at work. In the meditative withdrawal of self-consciousness out of its identifications with distinct acts of consciousness, which are performed within this space, the space shows itself as self-conscious. Therefore it can be indicated by the word *Self (ātman).* This Self can be experienced as the embracing and even creative and free origin of the manifold acts of consciousness. Therefore these acts can be understood as the acts of the Self. They show themselves in meditative experience as the forms in which the creative energy *(śakti)*[29] of the Self expresses itself.

By this reconstruction, we can understand why Abhinavagupta asserts that the knower is self-shining *(svaprakāśa)* and independent, free *(svatantra),* and how he understands these characteristics.

2. The full dimensions of the knower thus understood show up more clearly in the second part of Abhinavagupta's argument, where he is moving on to the identification of the knower with the Great Lord. The identification is performed in an argument that appears idealistic which we cannot go into extensively here. In short: Abhinavagupta denies the independence of the object on account of its nature of being light. If the object would not be *prakāśa-svabhāva,* if it would not have light as its nature, it could never be made shining. Finally, the truth is that light is shining *(prakāśaḥ prakāśate).*[30] *"If finally there is nothing more than this, which difference is there between all-knowing and not-all-knowing?"*[31] The object of the knower, who is demonstrated in part (1) of the argumentation, is, finally, not limited. Therefore the knower cannot be distinguished from the Great Lord, who is considered to be all-knowing. The object does not add anything to the knower. From the beginning the knower embraces all the objects in an undifferentiated form.[32] Here Abhinavagupta takes up an argument that Utpaladeva presented before

him elsewhere, in *IPK* (1.33): "Just like before [i.e., before the act of knowing] the object would be without light, if its nature would not be light." To clarify the meaning of the verse, one could translate the word *light (prakāśa)* in a more dynamic way as *shining*, in the line of Erich Frauwallner's German translation: "When shining would not belong to its nature, the object would shine as little as before."[33] One might say that object-knowledge is a form of identity with the object. This should be understood in a perspective of nonduality, but not necessarily of an 'illusionism' in the form found in the Śaṅkara school.[34]

Although the object is not independent from the knower, we should notice that Abhinavagupta has declared the knower to be *of self-shining nature (sva-prakāśa-svabhāva)* and the object of knowledge to have a light-nature *(prakāśa-svabhāva)* or to have a shining nature *(prakāśa-māna-svabhāva)*.[35] The object facing the knower was presupposed in the argument (1) (a) and was said to be dependent *in its shining* on the knower, who is independent in his self-shining. But here, in argument (2), it turns out to be dependent *in its own nature*, which is light or shining, on the knower, who is of a *self*-shining nature.

Thus, a change in perspective has taken place after argument (1) (a). The otherness of the object, which was presupposed there, is now relativized. One could understand this in the perspective of Utpaladeva's *IPK* 1.38: "Because God, who is essentially intellect, makes the things that are inside him shine outside without any material substrate, by the power of his will, just like a yogī."[36] The freedom *(svātantrya)* that makes current objects shine as though separated from the knower is not the freedom of ordinary people, but that of the yogin. And God, the Great Lord, is considered here as the yogin par excellence. Although the objects shine as though outside God, fundamentally they remain inside him. But to persons who understand themselves as limited subjects and have not yet discovered their true identity, the object is the other, just like the other subjects appear to them as others. The status of the limited subject is discussed by Abhinavagupta later on (see below).

One might wonder if argument (2) is really sufficient to understand the identity of the knower with the Great Lord. Up to now, Abhinavagupta's argumentation in *IPV* 1.1.2 only leads toward *a Lord* who is self-shining and who, 'always already' embracing *his* acts and objects, separates and reconnects them. There might be more than one Lord like this. Some sort of monadological structure is not yet excluded. One might wonder if such a Lord is embracing, as a knower, just *all* the objects of his knowledge. But one might take a further step. According to verse *IPK* 1.2, the own self, who is identical with the Great Lord, is not only a knower *(jñātṛ)* but also an actor *(kartṛ)*. Abhinavagupta interprets this status of an actor especially by means of the notion of independence/freedom *(svātantrya)*. As the Great Lord, this actor is all-doing, almighty.

He embraces all acts of consciousness and objects and is able to separate them and to unify them by *inner connection.* One might claim that in a strictly monadic structure with several knowers and actors, who would all be on the level of the Great Lord, none of these actor-knowers would apply to *all* objects. But Abhinavagupta himself does not seem to bother about a possible monadological result of his argumentation. This thought does not arise, probably because for him the Great Lord is the Great One above many smaller Lords. And perhaps one might say that, from the perspective of the limited knower who does not yet notice his identity with the Great Lord, the objects are not yet experienced as dependent on his freedom or as fundamentally inside the knower. To the limited knower, they show themselves as objective reality, distinguished from the knower. Thus, in the first instance, the idea of a limitation of the number of possible objects based on the nature of the subject would not arise at all. The idealistic argument shows up only later on, demonstrating the unlimited width of the knower.

Thus it becomes clear that, by the idealistic argument (2), Abhinavagupta has arrived at a superhuman level. It is his intention to show that an attempt to prove or to refute the Great Lord is identical with an attempt to prove or to refute oneself. There is no need to search far and wide for the Great Lord. One cannot escape from him, for he is one's own Self. And what one has to presuppose about oneself as a knower shows, by means of certain phenomena of knowledge that are understood in a specific way, that Self and Great Lord are not to be distinguished. In argument (2), however, as in (1) (a), this is performed in a questioning way. The author seems to suggest that we should first consider thoroughly his arguments, because their consequences exceed our current self-consciousness in a radical way.

This brings us to an issue that is important for the evaluation of the arguments presented. It seems as if teachers like Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta are on the one hand convinced of the compelling character of their arguments, but on the other hand they seem so conscious of the—also existentially—far-reaching implications of their thoughts that they might themselves have been surprised at the possibility of arguing in this context at all. It is true that, before their audience, they appeal to certain phenomena in the field of knowledge, but they see these phenomena in a special light and from the perspective of special presuppositions. They are conscious that phenomenal reality, as it presents itself to the unredeemed consciousness, is full of veils and even resting on inner contradictions. As far as I can see, they integrate such contradictions in their systematic reflections on the whole of reality.[37] The contradictions are employed to show that reality is fundamentally different from how we think about it from the point of view of our still unredeemed consciousness, and even more contradictory than we are inclined to think.

The Limited Subject, Recognition, and the Paradoxes of Freedom

In the first and second sections, we presented the intellectual way in which Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta tried to widen and intensify our view of the identity of the knower. Consequently, the status of the current individual subject becomes questionable. This status is discussed by Abhinavagupta just after his analysis of the *Who,* which we dealt with in the second section. In doing so, he emphasizes at the same time the *great* identity of the true knower-and-actor. "Therefore, when [the Self] assumes a thing, considered as an object, as [its] body, [then, though] appearing to this extent, [finally] only the Self shines which is without division."[38] For Abhinavagupta, there is fundamentally only *one* Knower, or, as he will state later in the text: "(because it will be said that) the ... difference between the own and the other knower rests on [the power] of illusion."[39]

How is one to understand the status of the limited subject? From the foregoing, we know that, for Abhinavagupta, the object is the result of a (finally relative) separation of something essentially shining (but not self-shining), a separation performed by the Knower out of himself. We remember the image of the divine Knower as the great yogin in the second section (2), where he causes the shining objects, which are (permanently) inside him, to appear as being outside. Now we can understand Abhinavagupta's conception of the limited subject in this way: that the self-shining Knower (the Self) possesses the freedom *(svātantrya)* not only to make objects appear as being outside, but also to assume an object as his own body and to appear as embodied in it, or at least as determined in his identity by this body.[40] The one Knower appears in the limited subject, as it were, outside himself, that is, distinct from the Great Lord. In this way, one can also understand that the limited subjects appear as distinct from each other and from the distinct objects.

Based on this, we can form a clearer idea of Recognition *(pratyabhijñā)* and its counterpart. Human beings who do not yet recognize their true identity as the one and only Knower-and-Actor, consider themselves as distinct from the Great Lord and from other knowers-and-actors. Also, the objects appear to them as being outside. They might have some notion that they are a self-shining and free interiority that embraces the objects. Yet, primarily, they are conscious of themselves as a separate, though shining, object. In Recognition, they become conscious of the fact that their true identity is that of the Great Lord, that is, that they are the one self-shining and radically free Knower-and-Actor who embraces all objects. Does the limited identity, that characterizes them as a human knower and actor disappear in this case? Precisely because they recognize their true *freedom,* the answer to this question should rather be that only then do they understand their limited identity as it really is: as the result of a self-veiling activity, performed by their

own freedom as the Great Lord. They understand how they themselves as the Knower-and-Actor, veil in this self-veiling activity their self-shining and all-embracing nature and their freedom.

Thus, Recognition does not bring about an external connection between the subject as a limited knower, who appears as being outside, and the Great Lord. In Recognition, one's true identity, which fundamentally never got lost, is 'realized' through an *inner connection* of the subject that appears separately, with the Great Lord. In Recognition, the knowers and actors become conscious of the complete dimensions of their own freedom, which is able to hide itself from itself and to rediscover itself. Thus, the limited subject does not necessarily disappear,[41] but is *decentered*[42] in such a way that it proves itself to be a manifestation of the freedom of the true Self, even insofar as it is a result of its self-veiling activity.

It is true that to the limited self-consciousness the freedom of the Self cannot be veiled completely. Otherwise, even argument (2) (b) in the second section would no longer be possible. But the limited self-consciousness has a tendency to forget even the small degree of freedom that becomes manifest in it. This tendency forms part of the self-veiling character of the freedom of the true Self. Likewise, within the limited subject, the self-shining and all-(objects-)embracing character of subjectivity is not completely absent. But the limited self-consciousness has a tendency to veil these characteristics by identifying itself with an object. Arguments (1) and (2) in the second section bring to light some of the inner contradictions of such tendencies and of the status of the limited subject. Thus they contribute to the recognizing awareness of the true Self in its full paradoxicality. If one can speak here of transcendental arguments (in a post-Kantian sense), they are presented precisely to show the full dimensions of paradoxicality in the true Self, which is identical with the Great Lord. This fits well into the image of Śiva as a God of opposites. He is the Creator, Protector, and Destroyer. As the Creator he veils himself up to a 'forgetting' self-identification with objects thought as separate. Protecting his creation, he makes his self-veiling persist, and, at the same time, offers the opportunity to Recognition. Destroying his creation, he removes self-veiling and Recognition and comes to (a non-persisting) rest in his 'always already' shining clarity.

One might wonder, if all this is not more likely a sort of evolution than a matter of self-veiling and Recognition. Instead of the paradoxes of self-veiling and Recognition, there would be a growth of consciousness from an unconscious state through outward multiplicity toward a higher unity. But this would imply that Śiva would not be conscious of himself before the process. One might perhaps make such a statement about Śiva-in-us, but certainly not about Śiva-in-himself. Even in the beginning, he is conscious of himself. Nor can it be said that, for the growth of

his self-consciousness, he would need the whole process of self-veiling and Recognition. As far as I can see, Abhinavagupta's thought moves here on two tracks: the Great Lord is 'always already' conscious of himself, and at the same time he realizes his whole process. In its sequence, the process is more suited to our consciousness as a limited subject than the radical unity of the Great Lord's self-consciousness, though this unity is apt to be thought of in a certain way and even to be argumentatively defended.

In the true Self or the Great Lord, we are dealing with a type of consciousness more subtle than we Westerners are used to. This becomes clear in some phrases that Abhinavagupta adds immediately after the passage on the limited subject, quoted above: "Also to someone in deep sleep [the Self which is without separation] shines."[43] Then he presents arguments, similar to those found in Śaṅkara, for example in his *US* Prose 2.92 f., pointing toward a form of consciousness without object. In the *ātman* traditions since the old Upaniṣads, this consciousness without object was considered to be higher and clearer than the current dual consciousness, which is directed toward an opposite. Here we meet a primacy of a unity, which is thought of as a unity of the subject and can therefore never be expressed adequately. The subject-object relation is considered a derivative form of this original unity of the subject, a unity that is not regarded as unconscious, but rather as *superconscious.* Only from the point of view of an identification with one or more objects is the original unity of the subject to be considered not conscious.

A characteristic of this unity of the subject is that, on the one hand, it is fundamentally not to be objectified. On the other hand, a logic of unity applies to it that formulates ex negativo a radical immanence and puts our consciousness on the track of this unity of the subject. Although this logic might suggest that we are dealing with the unity of an object, it implies, when applied to the subject, already on the level of thought, a radical inversion of the current tendencies of our consciousness. In the light of this logic, the limited subject and finally the whole of reality manifest themselves in their inner-contradictory—or, from the final 'point of view' of Śiva, paradoxical—character.

If our interpretation is correct, the more general definition of the freedom of the knower-and-actor, presented by Abhinavagupta later in *IPV* 1.1.2,[44] can be elucidated as follows: *"And its [i.e., of the self] freedom is: bringing separation in the nonseparate [which at the same time remains fundamentally non-separate], and undoing by inner connection the separation of what is separated [which in a sense remains separated]."* Thus, within the framework of unity, the paradoxical character of reality is not weakened or blurred, but heightened. In this way this thought points toward the full dimensions of the never absent unity

of the true Self. Thus the phenomena are not simply *saved*, but are, in their paradoxicality, presented as *the means of salvation*.

Further Interpretation, Practical and Theoretical Presuppositions, and Starting Points for a Comparison

In this section, with the help of Utpaladeva's distinction between *seeing* and *noticing*, a further interpretation is attempted (1). Then some remarks are made concerning the practical, meditative presuppositions of this way of thinking (2). Finally, some theoretical presuppositions of this thought are emphasized in order to find starting points for a more explicit comparison with Western philosophy (3).

1. In the previous sections, we have several times made use of the category of *noticing*. Utpaladeva himself works, in his third verse (*IPK* 1.3), with a distiction between *seeing (dṛś-)* and *noticing (upalakṣ-)*: "But because, by force of blinding, he [i.e., the Great Lord] is *seen* indeed, but not *noticed*. . . ."[45] The own Self, the Great Lord (*IPK* 1.2) is 'always already' *seen*—even in the blinded state, in our terminology: in the self-veiling condition, the *seeing* has not disappeared. But the issue is whether the true Self is *noticed* or not. The real contrast lies between only-seeing and seeing-and-noticing. Seeing-and-noticing the true Self is identical with Recognition. The dynamics of freedom of the true Self are the dynamics of noticing. The inner evidence of the Self never disappears. It is always *seen*. But, in its freedom, the Self limits its attention or widens it.

In the following, in order to provide a better understanding, we will make a short attempt to clarify the problems inherent in the philosophy of Recognition by means of the categories of *seeing* and *noticing*. As one may have observed already in the area of object-knowledge, it is possible to direct one's attention, even in such a way that it is almost *absorbed* by a particular object: only the object is noticed. It is also possible to perceive the same object as inserted in its environment without the object losing its particularity. The environment was 'always already' present, and, properly speaking, one knows *(sees)* it all the time. But it is not *noticed* all the time. Now we should consider that the term *noticing* does not always have the same meaning. When we notice the object in its environment, the environment is not noticed in the same way as the object. Widening the area of attention is not simply a matter of quantity. The environment is noticed as a periphery. At the same time, the noticing itself of the object has received more *space*. When we notice only the object, this space seems to be enclosed within the limits of the object. Thus it is also a matter of the quality of the attention. The same is indicated by the expression *absorption by the object*. In this case, the knower identifies with the object. When the knower notices the object-

in-its-environment it is no longer possible for the knower to identify purely with the object, but the knower might identify with the environment in which the object appears.

We find a similar case when attention is extended toward the noticing consciousness. The object-in-its-environment does not disappear, and the noticing activity itself is not noticed in the same way as the pure object or as the object-in-its-environment. It is possible to study the noticing activity or to reflect upon it in a quasi-objectifying way. This is what we are trying to do. But in doing so we point toward a phenomenon that one cannot objectify adequately: in noticing the object or the object-in-its-environment, one may *forget* one's own attention, or one may be conscious of one's own act of noticing (and even of its self-determining character) in a 'noticing' way. This kind of (not explicitly reflexive) self-consciousness does not enclose the attention within itself, but is conscious of it precisely in its openness to the 'world'. Also, the insertion of the actual act of attention in the 'environment' of other, not actual, acts may be noticed. Thus, the *freedom* of the actual noticing act may be noticed, too. The more the noticing activity awakes for its own more subjective aspects, the more it manifests itself as being in an immediate relation to itself. It manifests itself as being open to its own acts and objects (and, in this respect, as *embracing* them), and as *free,* that is, within this lasting openness, as able to focus itself upon a particular act and a particular object up to the point of letting itself be absorbed by only one object.[46]

In this way, one can understand the deepening of attention: the more *self-related* the attention is, the more it manifests itself as open, embracing, and free. This may be confirmed by experience in the practice of meditative attention. With this widened use of the category of *noticing,* we may still not have arrived at the Self, nor at the Great Lord; yet a direction is shown in which, supported by Utpaladeva's own terminology, one may develop a more consciousness-oriented insight into the paradoxical relation of unity and multiplicity as it becomes manifest in Abhinavagupta's notion of the freedom of the Self.[47]

It is important, finally, that whatever is noticed, is always marked by a self-identification with it. Whatever manifests itself, even in the most veiled forms, it is always the Self. And within the process of increasing attention, one always notices the noticed *as if* it were a real self. The more the way in which the noticed represents the Self is reduced and veiled, the more inadequately the Self manifests itself. The problem is precisely that one does not notice the inadequacy, and considers primarily and mostly the inadequate form *as one's own true self.*[48] The closer our attention approaches the true Self, the less inadequately our identity manifests itself, and the clearer we notice the true character of our less adequate self-identifications. Only in Recognition are the

true dimensions of these, in a way, false and inadequately limited self-identifications noticed.

2. Against this background, we may, at least to some extent, understand the 'practical', spiritual dimensions of Recognition. In noticing the blinding as a self-blinding, one also 'notices' the true Self, especially in its freedom, that is, as blinding itself and as vainly searching for its own fullness in its limited manifestations. All practice of meditation aims at 'noticing' the *always already* 'seen' true Self and, at the same time, at finding final clarity concerning the contradictions that are constitutive for the limited forms of consciousness. In this way one may also understand that Recognition, as the really adequate 'noticing' of the Self, does not necessarily take its leave of the world, but is now finally able to *enter* into it *as it is*: the result of a contradictory self-veiling of the Great Lord. A characteristic of the blindness, in regard to the Self, is that it does not take the world as it is.

3. In attempting this interpretation of Utpaladeva's and Abhinavagupta's arguments, by intellectual reconstruction and recurrence to phenomena in the sphere of consciousness, we have engaged in a more or less implicit kind of comparative philosophy. It is within the hermeneutic strategies of this and cognate kinds that the philosophical comparison begins.[49] With some observations on the characteristic presuppositions of their thought, we arrive at our last issue, which may serve as a starting point for a further, more explicit comparison with forms of Western philosophy.

In Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta we find *a quite particular conception of unity.* This conception forms the framework within which they interpret the phenomena of consciousness. Unity, in their view, is primarily the *unity of a subject.* And the true—Great—Subject embraces everything. This embracing character is not first realized in the process of freedom. It is 'always already' present and also *seen.* But it is only gradually *noticed* by the limited subject. Thus, the freedom of the (Great) Subject is not a creative one in the Christian or in the modern sense. It is an *emanative* freedom in that only a limited form of the same Subject, and not something really new, is manifested by it. It is the freedom of self-veiling and self-recognition. Every kind of *outside* finally turns out to be *inside.*

Might one say that we find here a kind of 'totalitarian' thought, heightened to an absolute level where no room is left for the other (Other)? Is this a philosophy of the subject that, in continuity with tendencies of the egocentric and self-enclosing subject, leaves no room for the fundamentally ethical appeal of the Other (E. Levinas)? One must admit that this is not a philosophy of intersubjectivity in the strict sense. And the other as other is considered here only as a limitation of the

identity of the Self. Nevertheless, a conception of subjectivity is offered in which the not-open, self-enclosing subject, which tries to absorb everything else, is considered as a form in which subjectivity manifests itself only in a veiled and inadequate way, and does not even notice its inadequacy. Opposite to this wrongly self-centering subject stands the true Self as the Other. The self-centering limited subject is *decentered* here, albeit with arguments that, for a contemporary Western understanding, seem to refer to the sphere of self-centering. But the fact that Abhinavagupta's 'transcendental' arguments for the radical immanence of the subject (second section, [1] [a] and [2]) lead to the level of the Great Lord may already warn us against the impression that they simply aim at the self-foundation of the limited subject. One might wonder if the idea of an inner evidence of the subject does not always touch a dimension that transcends the limited subjectivity, as one may conclude, for example, from the role of the proof of the existence of God in Descartes' third Meditation, where finally God's veracity must guarantee the truth of the *cogito*'s content.[50] Be this as it may, it is clear that, for Abhinavagupta, the limited human subjectivity is characterized by an inner contradiction that is only partly conscious. Only in a derivative sense may we speak here of human autonomy. The small amount of human autonomy puts us on the track of the true divine autonomy of the Great Lord. This autonomy is not a fixed, self-enclosing one, which protects itself against everything. In a certain respect one may call it, applying a Christian terminology, a *kenotic* one.[51] In opposition to the distorted human autonomy, it manifests itself as infinitely more open and perhaps even vulnerable. It does not force itself upon us. A transcendental argument for it may be rejected on the basis of different presuppositions. It may manifest itself only in the miracle of the *Aha*-experience of Recognition.

This leads us to remarks on the *idea of God*. Is this God, who is the true Self, really so open and vulnerable? Abhinavagupta thinks of the autonomy of the Great Self as freely negating itself. Does this not mean that it is only open to its own *self-performed* negation? And is this negation, especially when in the form of injustice, suffering, or evil, not made harmless within the framework of such an idea of a free and all-embracing Self? These kinds of questions are not easily answered. They touch upon the characteristics of Abhinavagupta's idea of the absolute. In itself every act of resistance against injustice or evil could also be considered as belonging to the Great Lord. But the Great Lord, our true Self, is finally elevated above all the contrasts we experience, and at the same time, he manifests and hides himself in all phenomena. There is trickery in his play. One might also say that Śiva, our true Self, is at the same time horrible and merciful. He is not an ethical God, unless he is seen as inverting every fixation and liberating us from it. As regards him,

the problem of the theodicea, in its classical form, is not applicable. But in his freedom, he is at the same time, as his name states, Śiva, the merciful. He is transcendent, because no ambiguity is strange to him. Finally, he brings to rest all oppositions, precisely because he realizes his third function. For Śiva is not only the Creator and Protector, but also the Destroyer. But he will disturb anew the rest which he realized as the Destroyer. Yet this rest always was, is, and will be forever. This is the way in which the Śivaitic Indians express the *tremendum* of divine presence. It is connected with the way they understand their meditative experiences of silence. On this point there is still much research and comparative study to be done.[52]

In conclusion: as we saw in Utpaladeva's *IPK* 1.2 (above, first section), he presupposes that intelligent activities are only possible if they are supported by an intelligent subject that is 'always already' evident in itself. The full dimensions of this self-evident and all-embracing intelligent subjectivity became clearer in Abhinavagupta's commentary *IPV* 1.1.2 (above, second section). In both cases, however, one should guard against a too massive interpretation. For Utpaladeva, the inner evidence of the intelligent subject is not *massive,* not inevitable to consciousness. It is vulnerable; it may be forgotten and recognized. Although the subject, in its inner evidence, is 'always already' *seen* as supporting the knowledge of the object, it is generally *not noticed.* The subtlety of its evidence makes it possible for people to have the foolish idea that they can refute it or even prove it. How strict are the 'transcendental' argumentations here? As argumentations, they are, as we have seen, not without presuppositions. The Buddhists do not have to accept them. But if one accepts them, they can only *point* toward the self-evidence, the 'always already' shining inner evidence of the Great Self. It is not for nothing that the breakthrough toward a real noticing of this self-evident Self is pictured as a wonderful *Aha*-experience. And if one would think it possible to realize Recognition simply within the framework of an argumentation, one would, already at the level of the arguments for the freedom of the self, be confronted with the paradoxical character of the whole enterprise and thus with the limits of one's thought. One may have known already from the end of Abhinavagupta's commentary on *IPK* 1.1 that the texts do not deal with the self in the third person, but with myself in the *first* person.[53]

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was published in German: "Einheit und Widerspruch: Über einige Evidenzargumente in der Schule der Wieder-

erkennung des Kaśmirischen Śivaismus," in Joachim Schickel, Hans Bakker, and Bruno Nagel, *Indische Philosophie und Europäische Rezeption*, Dialectica Minora 5 (Cologne, 1992), pp. 57–83.

Abbreviations are used in the text and in the Notes below as follows:

IPK *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Kārikāḥ* (Utpaladeva). 1921. Edited by M. S. Kaul. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, 34. Srinagar.

IPV *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśinī* (Abhinavagupta). 1918, 1921. Edited by M. R. Shāstrī. 2 vols. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, 22 and 33. Srinagar.

US *Upadeśa-Sāhasrī* (Śaṅkara). 1973. Edited by S. Mayeda. Tokyo.

1 – According to Pandey 1963, p. 162.

2 – Ibid., p. 9.

3 – See, e.g., *IPK* 4.17, where the comparison is made with a woman in love, who has been longing for her beloved one for a long time, and who only recognizes him after having been *told that it is he.*

4 – *IPK* 1.2, ed. Kaul, pp. 1–2: *kartari jñātari ādisiddhe maheśvare ajaḍātmā niṣedhaṃ vā siddhiṃ vā vidadhīta kaḥ;* see Frauwallner 1962, p. 33.

5 – See *IPK* 1.6–16; ed. Kaul, pp. 3–7; translation Frauwallner 1962, pp. 33–34.

6 – See Abhinavagupta *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 34/5 ff.

7 – This translation of *niṣedha—refuting*—seems to me more adequate than Frauwallner's translation: *denying* (G *leugnen).*

8 – *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 34/13 ff.

9 – See *IPK* 1.3; below, fourth section, (1).

10 – In his folly, the opponent relates these activities to a special 'object': 'the own Self, . . . the highest Lord'. But for the time being, this does not yet play a part in Abhinavagupta's argumentation.

11 – *IPV* 1.1, 2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 29/7–30/12: *iha ka īśvare kīdṛśe kīdṛśena pramāṇena astīti jñānalakṣaṇaṃ siddhiṃ, nāstīti jñānalakṣaṇaṃ vā niṣedhaṃ kuryāt? pramātā iti cet, sa eva kaḥ? dehādir jaḍaḥ uta tadanyo vā kaścit ātmādiśabdaḥ vācyaḥ? so'pi svaprakāśasvabhāvo vā na vā? dehādir jaḍaḥ iti cet, sa eva svātmani asiddhaḥ paratra kāṃ siddhiṃ kuryāt? ātmāpi asvaprakāśo jaḍa eva tattulyayogakṣemaḥ. svaprakāśasvabhāvaḥ iti cet, kīdṛśena svena rūpeṇa ābhāti? yadi pariniṣṭhitasaṃvinmātrarūpeṇa, tadā saṃvidāṃ bhedanaṃ, bheditānāṃ ca antaranusaṃdhānena abhedanaṃ na syāt; tena svatantrasvaprakāśātmatayā tāvat ca bhāsate. . . .*

12 – The term *siddhi*, which was translated at the beginning of this quotation (and in Utpaladeva's verse) as 'proof', could here be translated in the same way, but then its meaning does not fit well with the perfect participle *siddha*, which, in this context, is better translated as 'evident' than as 'proven'. This evidence could be the result of a proof, but, in the case of being '*siddha*-in-himself', this does not fit. Even at the beginning of the quotation, the meaning of the words *siddhi* and *niṣedha* lays more emphasis on the result of the activity than on the activity itself, which is indicated by the word *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge).

13 – The locative *paratra* might also be understood as indicating the person to whom something is (made) evident. I did not choose such a translation, but I have taken the locative in the meaning of 'in regard to', indicating the object that is made evident, as in the beginning of this quotation with the locative in *kīdṛśe īśvare:* 'in regard to what kind of Lord'. Pandey (1954, p. 10) translates it the same way.

14 – *jaḍa* vs. *ātman.*

15 – *asvaprakāśa* vs. *svaprakāśasvabhāva.*

16 – *pariniṣṭhita-saṃvin-mātra-rūpeṇa (ābhāti)* vs. *svatantra-(svaprakāśa-) ātmatayā bhāsate.*

17 – *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 30/5–6: *sa eva svātmani asiddhaḥ paratra kāṃ siddhiṃ kuryāt?*

18 – See note 16.

19 – *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 30/9–11: *(yadi parinisṭhitasaṃvin-mātrarūpeṇa,) tadā saṃvidāṃ bhedanaṃ, bheditānāṃ ca antar-anusaṃdhānena abhedanaṃ na syāt.*

20 – Emphasizing the word 'only' in the first member, I might say 'when the knower is *also* free/independent'. Thus the first member would be rejected only in its exclusivity. See Nagel 1986, pp. 85 ff.

21 – Probably this doctrine has its origin in the Dharmakīrti school; cp. Vetter 1964, p. 31 n. 32, and Steinkellner 1967, p. 97 n. 49.

22 – *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 30/10–11: *bheditānāṃ (samvidāṃ) ca antaranusaṃdhānena abhedanaṃ.*

23 – See Frauwallner 1962, pp. 25–27, 33–36.

24 – See Frauwallner 1969, pp. 101–104 (The Doctrine of Momentariness in the Ontology of Sautrāntika), and Vetter 1964, pp. 13–18 (this aspect of the ontology of Sautrāntika is borrowed by Dharmakīrti). In this respect, the Buddhist introduced by Utpaladeva has the traits of a follower of the Dharmakīrti school.

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25 - *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 31/13–14: *svātantryaṃ ca asya [ātmano] 'bhede bhedanaṃ bhedite ca antaranusaṃdhānena abhedanaṃ.*

26 - *IPV* 1.3.7; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 110/1–3: *yat kila tat ābhāsyate tat saṃvido vicchidyate, saṃvic ca tataḥ, saṃvic ca samvidantarāt, saṃvedyaṃ ca saṃvedyāntarāt.*

27 - See Nagel 1986, pp. 107 ff.

28 - See Alper 1979: already in its subtitle, "The Spaciousness of an Artful Yogi."

29 - The notion of *śakti* (energy, power) is related to the female, manifesting the energy of the Lord Śiva. See Larson 1974 (also bibliographically useful). It is also connected with the degrees of the word *(vāc).* See Padoux 1990 and also note 47 below.

30 - *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 31/3.

31 - Ibid., 31/3–4: *ity etāvanmātraparamārthatve kaḥ sarvajñāsarvajñavibhāgaḥ?*

32 - What Abhinavagupta says here can be interpreted with the help of the interpretation of *IPV* 1.3.7 (commentary on *IPK* 1.23): also the separation of consciousness and object rests on a previous non-separateness of both. See note 26.

33 - Frauwallner 1962, p. 36: "Wenn das Erhellen nicht zu seinem Wesen gehörte, würde (jeder) Gegenstand so wie früher unerhellt bleiben"; *IPK* 1.33ab; ed. Kaul, p. 14: *prāg ivārtho 'prakāśaḥ syāt prakāśātmatayā vinā.*

34 - See Vetter 1979, pp. 40 ff.

35 - *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 30/20–31/1.

36 - *IPK* 1.38; ed. Kaul, p. 16: *cidātmaiva hi devo 'antaḥsthitaṃ icchāvaśād bahiḥ yogīva nirupādānaṃ arthajātaṃ prakāśayet.* See Frauwallner 1962, p. 37.

37 - E.g., in *IPV* 1.1.3; see Nagel 1986, chap. 4, esp. pp. 162–173; also Nagel 1993, p. 173.

38 - *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 31/6–8: *tasmāt viṣayābhimataṃ vastu śarīratayā gṛhītvā tāvat nirbhāsamāna ātmaiva prakāśate vicchedaśūnyaḥ.*

39 - Shāstrī, vol. 1 p. 31/11–12: *svaparapramātṛvibhāgasya ... māyīyatvena (vakṣyamāṇatvāt).* The text refers to *IPV* 1.1.4, 5 (vol 1, pp. 42–43, 48), where the problem is elaborated. The direct context of the quotation is the problem of the self-shiningness of the knower or the Self during deep sleep. Abhinavagupta solves this

problem partly like Śaṅkara in *US Prose* 2.92–93 (ed. Mayeda [Tokyo, 1973], p. 211). See the translations of Mayeda 1979, p. 243, and Hacker 1949, pp. 43–44; also Vetter 1979, pp. 85–86.

40 – Further research has to be done on Abhinavagupta's understanding of the embodiment of the Self (see also Nagel 1986, pp. 176 ff.). From the following one may conclude that, for him, embodiment implies a (relative) inner contradiction. This contradiction is comparable to Śaṅkara's idea of *avidyā* as *adhyāsa* or *adhyāropaṇa*, in his introduction to the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya and in *US* Prose 2: the current individual self-consciousness is constituted by the 'impossible' contradictory identification of subject and object, Self and not-Self, and of their characteristics.

41 – As in Śaṅkara. See, e.g., *US* Prose 2.109. See also Hacker 1949, p. 49.

42 – I.e., withdrawn from its false (in fact eccentric) center.

43 – *IPV* 1.1.2; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 31/8. With regard to Śaṅkara, see the passages referred to above, in note 39.

44 – See above, note 25. A further argument for this interpretation may be found in the paradoxical character of the seven 'ways' of self-manifestation of the Great Lord, as described in *IPV* 1.1.3. See Nagel 1986, pp. 153–173.

45 – *IPK* 1.3; ed. Kaul, p. 2: *Kiṃtu mohavaśād asmin dṛṣṭe'py anupalakṣite....* In the first section, we made use of the term *noticing* in our interpretation of *IPK* 1.2.

46 – The general framework of this interpretation—without the technical issues specific for the Pratyabhijñā school—proves also useful in the interpretation of much older ātman texts, e.g., the dialogue of Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī in Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4. See Nagel 1983.

47 – Against this background a new and clearer understanding may be developed of Utpaladeva's and Abhinavagupta's distinction between *prakāśa* (light, shining) and *vimarśa*, translated by Alper (1979, p. 350) as "personal judgement" and by Frauwallner (1962, p. 27) as "ein von Denksprechen begleitetes Urteil" (a judgement accompanied by inner thought-talk). In my opinion, *vimarśa* is to be connected with *levels* of *noticing*. On a certain level, *vimarśa* may have the form of a judgment. This is the case with a spoken judgment, and also with the use of arguments. Even on the level of the judgment, which implies a kind of objectifying, some noticing of the true Self takes place. On this level, the arguments for the evidence of the Self have a special status, because they point

toward a higher level of noticing. This may be connected with the levels of the Word *(vāc)*. In this way the highest level of noticing—Recognition—would be related to the highest level of the Word. See Nagel 1986, pp. 199 ff.; Padoux 1990, pp. 166 ff.; Bäumer 1978; Larson 1974.

48 – See above, the beginning of the third section, and note 40. See also Nagel 1993, p. 173.

49 – In my opinion, even the more objectifying use of comparative models in philosophy—in which, in our countries, Professor Ulrich Libbrecht has become an authority—seems to be rooted in a situation which must be understood from a hermeneutic point of view.

50 – See, recently, Ricoeur 1990, pp. 18 ff., in connection with M. Gueroult's criticism.

51 – See St. Paul, in Phil. 2:7. Also with St. Paul, after the emptying *(kenosis)*, the exaltation follows. In the case of Śiva, after the exaltation he will empty himself again. At the same time he is always as he is.

52 – See, e.g., Daniélou 1982.

53 – *IPV* 1.1.1; ed. Shāstrī, vol. 1, p. 27/2 f.; see Bäumer 1978, p. 65.

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THE WORLD AS GOD'S 'BODY': IN PURSUIT OF DIALOGUE WITH RĀMĀNUJA

In this essay I propose to offer some observations in due course on how Christian thought and practice in general (though some reference will be made to the Indian context) might profit from a central theme in the theology of Rāmānuja, a Tamil Vaiṣṇava Brahmin whose traditional date straddles the eleventh and twelfth centuries of the Christian era.[1] The central theme I have in mind is expressed in Rāmānuja's view that the 'world' is the 'body' of Brahman or God.[2] We shall go on to explain what this means, but let me state first that my overall aim is to further inter-religious understanding, especially between Christian and Hindu points of view. In professing a concern for inter-religious dialogue I know that I reflect a longstanding interest of Professor H. D. Lewis. I shall seek to show that the Christian religion can profit both from the content and the method of Rāmānuja's body-of-God theology. To this end this essay is divided into two sections. Section 1 is the longer: it contains an analysis of what Rāmānuja did (and did not) mean by his body-of-God theme[3] – doubtless unfamiliar ground for most of the readers of this essay – and serves as a propaedeutic for what follows in section 2. In section 2 I shall attempt to 'extrapolate' Rāmānuja's thinking into a Christian context, with dialogue in mind. Section 2 cannot be appreciated for the promise I hope it holds out without the (sometimes involved) detail of the first section.

I

We start with the observation that Rāmānuja's theology affirms an abiding monotheism-cum-ontological-dualism.[4] His God has an essential nature or proper form ('svarūpa')[5] defined by the five characteristics of being (satya),

[1] For a summary of Rāmānuja's life and for discussion on his date cf. *The Theology of Rāmānuja* by J. B. Carman (New Haven and London, 1974), ch. 2.

[2] In this article 'God' is used as a descriptive term for the supreme being.

[3] This article contains the substance of a fuller discussion in my forthcoming book on Rāmānuja, *The Face of Truth*, to be published by Macmillan.

[4] In Hindu thought at least, a monotheist need not be a convinced ontological dualist. Śaṃkara, for example, espoused a theism which was to be sublated ultimately in an uncompromising non-dualism.

[5] Svarūpa: lit., the form proper to an entity *qua* that entity.

knowledge (jñāna), bliss (ānanda), infinitude (anantatva) and purity (amalatva), and characterized also by a host of non-defining qualities which for the most part[1] make up the catalogue the monotheist ascribes to his God in general. The Lord produces and sustains the real and lasting finite order – for all practical purposes this world comprising conscious and non-conscious being (cidacidvastu) – by his omniscience and omnipotence. There is much more we can say in this regard[2] but this is not to our purpose here. We are concerned with the fact that Rāmānuja goes on to maintain that the world is Brahman's (the Lord's) body, and that this assertion dominates the way he theologises. Clearly a great deal depends on what Rāmānuja means by 'body'. Let us deal with this first and then comment on what is meant by 'world'.

To begin with what are the main sources of our theologian's body-of-God language? They seem to be twofold: scriptural and sectarian. As to the former, Rāmānuja quotes both from the canonical scriptures (the śruti) and those texts (the smṛti) putatively backing up the śruti, in support of his view, but undoubtedly the most important for his purposes were śruti texts, especially from the seventh section of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad's third chapter. There it is said, for example: 'He who dwells in all beings, who is within all beings, whom all beings do not know, of whom all beings are the body, who controls all beings from within, he is your Self, the inner Controller, the immortal One...'.[3] Though such scriptural backing was more important than sectarian support for Rāmānuja's aim of making as universally respectable a case as possible for his position in the orthodox Hindu religious world of his time, it seems clear that hints for a body-of-God theology were present in the thought at least of his ācārya (rather than guru) predecessor, Yāmuna.[4] In any case, Rāmānuja was not theologising in a vacuum. He was certainly not keen to give the impression that he was 'doing theology in an original way', without obvious support from both scripture and an established interpretative tradition of the sacred texts, for he functioned in an orthodox thought-world which demanded the credentials of a socially respectable teaching pedigree in the study of the scriptures before it would even listen to what he had to say.

It is mainly in his great work the Śrī Bhāṣya, his chief commentary on the

[1] The exception arises through Rāmānuja's ascribing to the Lord a supernal, anthropomorphic form, constituted of a sui-generis substance that is not material. Contemplation of and association with this divine form, which possesses corporeal qualities like charm, beauty, pleasing proportions, etc., is part of the blissful experience of liberation. Of course, the Lord's divine form does not exhaust his divine nature nor is it to be identified with the essential core of his being (defined by the five characteristics mentioned earlier).

[2] Detailed discussions about the divine nature and divine causality will be found in my forthcoming book.

[3] III. 7. 15, Kāṇva recension.

[4] We cannot substantiate this here, but cf. *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, by Eric J. Lott (Rāmānuja Research Society, Madras, 1976), ch. III.

Brahma Sūtras, that Rāmānuja is at pains to clarify what he means by 'body' in our context.[1] The discussion is conducted in the traditional Hindu way of presenting one's case through a process of argument and counter-argument, objection and answer, till what one regards is the right conclusion (the siddhānta) is finally reached, secure from further challenge, in the eyes of its presenter at least, by virtue of its successful dialectic passage. Now surely, argues the opponent, the world cannot be the body of Brahman, for is not a body 'the locus of the senses which are the means for experiencing the pleasure and pain that are the fruit of (one's) karma, (a locus) which supports and yet depends upon the five modifications of breath and which is a special aggregate of the elements earth, etc.'?[2] Surely the supreme being, perfect, and transcending as it does the world of materiality, karma and rebirth, cannot have such a body? In answer, Rāmānuja rejects this understanding of 'body' as too narrow. We must operate with a meaning of 'body', he contends, that takes account of the range of literal uses of the term in sacred and ordinary (Hindu) parlance. Thus the opponent's definition of 'body' does not take account of the avatāric bodies of the Lord which are not made of ordinary elemental matter; nor does it apply to the bodies of plants which lack the fivefold breath, nor to the bodies of wood and stone of Ahalyā and other (folkloric) figures, which were not the abode of sense-organs. In fact, says Rāmānuja, giving his own definition of 'body', 'Any substance of a conscious being which can entirely be controlled and supported by that being for the latter's own purposes, and whose proper form is solely to be the accessory of that being, is the "body" of that being'.[3]

The following points are worth noting. First, Rāmānuja claims to have exposed the basic *literal* sense of 'body', one shorn of any *accidental* surplus of meaning (in contrast to what the opponent has done in *his* definition). This enables him to affirm as we shall see that created being is literally – not metaphorically – Brahman's body, yet not in any obvious sense.[4] Second, 'body' in the sense described can be predicated of a substance related only to a conscious entity, that is, in fact to the ātman or spiritual principle, which in the case of a spirit-matter composite is the immortal centre or 'self' of that

[1] Especially under II. 1. 8.–9. Quotations from this Sanskrit commentary in this essay are given from Vasudev Shastri Abhyankar's edition of the *Śrī-Bhāshya by Rāmānujāchārya* (Bombay, 1914, abbr. ShBh). Though all translations from the Sanskrit in this essay are my own, reference will be made to the corresponding page number of G. Thibaut's English translation of the Śrī Bhāṣya (*Sacred Books of the East*, ed. by F. Max Müller, vol. XLVIII) for those who wish to consult an English rendering in wider context.

[2] śarīraṃ hi nāma karmaphalarūpasukhaduḥkhopabhogasādhanabhūtendriyāśrayaḥ pañcavṛttiprāṇādhīnadhāraṇaḥ pṛthivyādibhūtasaṃghātaviśeṣaḥ. *Op. cit.* II. 1. 8, p. 409, ll. 8–10; Th., pp. 419–20.

[3] ato yasya cetanasya yaddravyaṃ sarvātmanā svārthe niyantuṃdhārayituṃ ca śakyaṃ taccheṣataikasvarūpaṃ ca tat tasya śarīram iti śarīralakṣaṇam āstheyam. *Op. Cit.* II. 1. 9, p. 413, ll. 14–16; Th., p. 424.

[4] Rāmānuja never says that the world is *like* (in Sanskrit with the use of '-vat' or 'iva') Brahman's body.

composite.[1] In other words, the 'ensouler-body' relation in our specialized context is an asymmetrical one in which the self or ātman is the dominant term. Finally, the concept of 'body' so defined prescinds from whether its referent is spiritual or material. *Any* substance, spiritual or material, which is related to a self in the way described is that self's 'body'. This makes it possible not only for material substances but also for spiritual substances, i.e. finite ātmans, to be the 'body' of the infinite, supreme Self or Ātman.

At this juncture we can comment on the meaning of 'world' in the statement: 'the world is Brahman's body'. Rāmānuja has not addressed this question explicitly, but it is not difficult to understand what he means by the term. In the first place, 'world' must not be understood in the sense of some sort of 'system' (open or closed). The sense of an organized inter-relation of discrete parts central to the word 'system' is absent from Rāmānuja's usage of 'world' that we are considering. He is using 'world' simply in the sense of 'aggregate of finite conscious and non-conscious beings (cidacidvastujāta), especially of such beings in their empirically manifest (prapañca) form'. Thus 'world (jagat)' here becomes no more than a collective term, a convenient short-hand, for finite individual substantival (conscious and non-conscious) entities or aggregates of such entities, and Rāmānuja is as prone (if not more so) to refer to such individuals as the 'body' of Brahman as he is to the whole collection. This cuts at the root any objection made against the body-of-God idea analogous to those made by A. Farrer, for example, against the anima-mundi doctrine of the ancient western world, a doctrine Farrer assumes is based on regarding the world as some kind of organic system.[2] This also makes it quite inappropriate to refer, as some modern commentators have done, to the relationship between Brahman and the world as his 'body', as organic. There is nothing 'organic' in the usual sense about this relationship.

Returning now to the basic sense of 'body' expressed by Rāmānuja earlier, this is how he describes the general relationship between the ātman as 'ensouler' and its 'body':

This is the relation between the self (ātman) and its body (in the sense we are considering): the relation between support and thing-supported such that the latter is incapable of being realized apart from the former, that between controller and thing-controlled, and that between principal and its accessory. The ātman – from

[1] In Vedāntic philosophical anthropology, the human individual is a composite of spiritual ātman, whose nature it is to be conscious, and material body (essentially insentient). Though Rāmānuja, in common with other Vedāntins, maintained that all living things (including plants) were composites of a material body and an ātman (whose uniform conscious nature in sub-human forms of life could not for one reason or other be expressed fully), it is clear that he regarded the human composite as the (qualitatively distinct) paradigm of the empirical union of spirit and matter, a paradigm we shall adhere to in this essay.

[2] See chapter 10, i.e. 'Anima Mundi' in A. Farrer's *Faith and Speculation* (Adam & Charles Black, London, 1967).

'āpnoti' (namely 'it obtains') – is that which in every respect is the support, controller and principal of what is the thing-supported, controlled, and the accessory, viz. the 'body' or form which exists as a mode (of the mode-possessor, i.e. the ātman), incapable of being realized apart (from the latter). Now this is the relation between the (finite) individual self and its own (material) body. Thus because the supreme Self is embodied (in the way described) by everything, it is expressed by every (type-naming) word.[1]

As is indicated by this passage towards the end, Rāmānuja maintains that the 'body-ensouler' relationship is instantiated microcosmically, as it were, between the finite ātman and its material body[2] and obtains macrocosmically between Brahman and the world/its individual entities. Though we shall be chiefly concerned with the latter application of this relationship in this essay, we shall see that the former, i.e. the microcosmic application has an important part to play in our appreciation of Rāmānuja's theological method.

Before we go on to examine this complex self-body model,[3] in terms of whose constituent relationships macrocosmically and microcosmically applied, Rāmānuja, in fact, understands the interplay between the One and the many, let me state that in the following discussion, unless their meaning is clear, I shall refer to the ensouling-self of the self-body model as the $self_m$, and to its 'body' as the $body_m$. Now as Rāmānuja describes it, the self-body model contains three constituent sub-models each with its own central relationship. To consider each briefly in turn.

(1) *The support/thing-supported (ādhāra/ādheya) relationship*

The operative expression explaining this relationship, as the quotation above informs us, is 'incapable of being realized apart from' (in Sanskrit, pṛthak-ṣiddhy-ạnarha) or PSA for short. In other words, in the context of the self-body model, the thing-supported (ādheya) is related to its support (ādhāra) in such a way that the former is 'incapable of being realized apart from' the latter. What exactly does this mean? To explain we must have recourse to two related concepts Rāmānuja makes use of, namely those of the 'mode (prakāra)' and of its correlate the 'mode-possessor (prakārin)'. The reference above also informs us that to be a $body_m$ is to be a 'mode', and then goes

[1] ayam eva cātmaśarīrabhāvaḥ pṛthaksiddhyanarhādhārādheyabhāvo niyantṛniyāmyab hāvaḥ śeṣa-śeṣibhāvaś ca. sarvātmanādhāratayā niyantṛtayāśeṣitayā ca – āpnotīty ātmā sarvātmanādheyatayā niyāmyatayā śeṣatayā ca – apṛthaksiddhaṃ prakārabhūtam ity ākāraḥ śarīram iti cocyate. evam eva hi jīvātmanaḥ svaśarrasaṃbandhaḥ. evam eva paramātmanaḥ sarvaśarīratvena sarvaśabdavācyatvam. From another important work by Rāmānuja, the Vedārthasaṃgraha, in J. A. B. van Buitenen's edition (Poona, 1956), paragraph 76, p. 114 (this edition also has an English annotated translation). The expression 'expressed by every (type-naming) word' refers to Rāmānuja's theory of divine denotative predication which cannot be dealt with here.

[2] Not, of course, in so far as the material body is made of matter, or has a distinctive shape, or functions in its characteristic biological ways, etc., but in so far as the material body is related to its ātman in the technical sense described in n. 1, above.

[3] 'Model' is to be understood in the sense of a conceptual structure or framework in terms of which a complex, multifaceted reality can be opened up to the understanding.

on to affirm that the relationship between mode and mode-possessor is of the PSA kind. Thus we can get a good idea of what the PSA relation is between support and thing-supported on the basis of what is meant by it between the mode and the mode-possessor. In fact Rāmānuja offers an explanation of the PSA expression in terms of the relation between the latter pair. Now in this context, there are two nuances to Rāmānuja's understanding of the PSA expression. One is ontological (*a*), the other (*b*) is epistemological.

(*a*) Consider the following quotation:

In the case of things like generic characteristics, because they are the mode of an entity in that they express the generic configuration (of that entity) – here the mode (viz. the generic characteristic) and the mode-possessor (viz. the individual entity) are different kinds of being – the mode is incapable of being realized apart from (the mode-possessor) and indeed of being rendered intelligible apart from (the latter).[1]

Rāmānuja is here considering the modal dependence of such things as generic or class characteristics on the individual entities instantiating them. Ontologically speaking, for him a class characteristic (jāti, e.g. 'cowness') cannot exist *in abstracto* as it were; it is realized in and through the individual (cows). The same point can be made for properties (guṇas) such as 'white', 'brown' and so on. Modes such as properties and class characteristics essentially have a borrowed being: they exist as the things they are by inhering in their ontological supports.[2] That is, in being they 'are incapable of being realised apart from' their ontological supports. This sort of ontological dependence obtains between the support and the thing-supported in the context of the self-body model.

Where the support is the finite ātman and the thing-supported its material body, the ontological (modal) dependence of latter on former is not absolute. No doubt the body needs its ātman to subsist as an organic entity, and, as Rāmānuja points out, at death, that is, upon being separated from the ātman, it disintegrates and ceases to be a body. Nevertheless the finite ātman is not the bestower of being to its body in the absolute sense: it has no power to originate its body existentially or to stave off biological death permanently. In the case of Brahman as ontological support, however, and the world (or individual substantival entities considered separately) as thing-supported, Brahman is, absolutely speaking, the bestower and mainstay of being. Finite being is his totally dependent mode. Well then, one may ask, if finite being has a totally dependent, that is, derived being, does not the spectre of the world's being, in the final analysis, an illusion arise? After all, that is what the Advaitins maintained. Rāmānuja emphatically rejects this point of view: the world does have a substantival reality, he affirms, a reality which cannot

[1] jātyāder vastusaṃsthānatayā vastunaḥ prakāratvāt prakāraprakārinoś ca padārthāntaratvaṃ prakārasya pṛthaksiddhyanarhatvaṃ pṛthaganupalambhaś ca.... VedS., para. 62, p. 107.

[2] For Rāmānuja class characteristics and qualities were things with a tenuous reality-status.

be sublated in terms of a 'higher' experience. How Rāmānuja tackles the demand to reconcile the total derivativeness of the world's being with its substantival reality is a question we will take up when considering his method.

(*b*) Besides making an ontological point, the quotation on page 150 makes also an epistemological point. This is to be found in the last phrase of the quotation. There it is said that the mode depends on the mode-possessor for its intelligibility. In other words, the mode-possessor (the prakārin) provides the mode's raison d'être. This is clear enough if we inspect the sort of relationship which exists between class characteristic and instantiating individual, but it also explains the otherwise puzzling phenomenon of Rāmānuja's willingness to refer to substantival entities as modes. Rāmānuja allows that such substances as ear-rings and staffs are to be reckoned as modes even though, unlike class characteristics and properties, they are capable of existing apart from their mode-possessor (viz. the ear-ring wearer and staff-bearer). If the PSA expression had no more than an existential import we could not explain the modal nature of substantival things like staffs and ear-rings. In fact, in the case of the relationship between the staff and its bearer, for instance, Rāmānuja is adverting mainly to the epistemological nuance of the PSA expression when he says that this relationship is modal. In other words, though *qua substance* the staff has an independent existence, *qua staff* it has no reason for existing, no intelligibility, apart from the staff-bearer. Staffs and ear-rings are to be understood for what they are only in relation to staff-bearer and ear-ring wearer respectively. They exist for the sake of the latter and as such are modes of the latter. The movement to grasp their intelligibility is in one direction only. Thus it does not matter really whether the mode in general is a substance or not; for something to be a mode it must either be essentially incapable of existing apart from the mode-possessor or be unintelligible as the sort of thing it is apart from the mode-possessor, or both. This is what Rāmānuja is intimating that the PSA expression says with respect to the kind of relationship that obtains between mode and mode-possessor; further he is implying that both the ontological and the epistemological nuances as described above apply in the PSA relation between support and thing-supported (the former's mode) in the context of the self-body model. This is why we have translated 'pṛthak-*siddhy*-ạnarha' by 'incapable of being *realized* apart from', where 'realized' is intended to bear both the ontological ('real-ized') and the epistemological ('realized') nuances. In other words Rāmānuja is saying that the thing-supported in so far as it is the body_m of its support cannot in essence exist apart from the latter (its self_m) nor be understood for what it is apart from the latter. That is, the self_m 'supports' its body_m (relatively or absolutely) both existentially and intelligibly.

Applying the self-body model microcosmically under this heading from the epistemological point of view, the finite material body, according to

Rāmānuja, is unintelligible for what it is (i.e. *this* organic body and of *this sort*) apart from the ātman. It derives its raison d'être from the latter and exists to serve the purposes – in the final resort, liberation – of the latter. But the material body's dependence on the ātman in this way is not absolute. The finite ātman cannot supply the body's raison d'être in its fullness, for the finite ātman itself is not its own raison d'être. For this side of the picture we must look to the macrocosmic application of the self-body model in this context. Here Brahman is the epistemological support of the world, his body_m – the ultimate principle of its intelligibility. In other words the world exists to serve Brahman's purposes (purposes neither extrinsically nor intrinsically necessary to Brahman, we might add). Speaking particularly, Brahman supplies the ultimate raison d'être of the finite ātmanic composite, which exists for Brahman's ends. Once more a question assails us: if the finite ātman derives its intelligibility from the supreme being alone, has it no import of its own in terms of which we can make sense of the material world? Is there no real meaning to our saying that the material world has intelligibility in terms of the finite ātman's ends? Rāmānuja would want to answer in the affirmative. Again, the way he goes about holding together the apparently conflicting insights of Brahman being the ultimate principle of intelligibility of everything and of the individual ātman being a real bestower of meaning in its own right to the material world, we will take up when dealing with Rāmānuja's method.

(2) *The controller/thing-controlled (niyantṛ/niyāmya*[1]*) relationship*

To begin with, the terminology here stresses the personal nature of the dominant term, i.e. the self_m, of the self-body model. But what sort of 'control' is being implied? It is significant that the Sanskrit term 'niyantṛ' which we have translated by 'controller' can be used in the sense of 'charioteer' (cf., e.g. Maitri Upaniṣad II.6). This gives us a clue to the relationship intended by Rāmānuja under this heading. Just as the charioteer guides and directs his horses along the path, and restrains them if wayward, so the self_m should act as guide to its body_m, leading it to its true end and checking it if wayward. If the body_m is a conscious principle this controlling must respect, in moral actions, the free will of the latter; if the body_m is not a conscious principle, or involuntary actions are being considered, the self_m is empowered to take full control to bring about its own acceptable ends. In any case the self_m as controller is presumed to have the knowledge and will to achieve its ends.

Macrocosmically considered, Brahman, the supreme Lord, is the controller of the world (or its individual substantival components), the thing-controlled. The Lord through his omniscience and omnipotence, guides and directs

[1] By rights, Sanskrit grammar demands 'niyamya' but all the best authorities have 'niyāmya'.

conscious and non-conscious beings to their destiny, their true fulfillment. Part of the general terminology of this sub-model is Rāmānuja's frequent description of the Lord as the 'inner controller (antaryāmin)' of finite being. Where conscious agents are concerned, the Lord guides and directs through the scriptures, through grace in genuine religious experience in private and social life, and last but not least through the power of the agent's karma which sets up the general options-for-living for the agent. Where the non-conscious world is concerned, by considering the accumulated and unmatured karma of all conscious beings of a previous world (for Vedāntins like Rāmānuja believed in the periodic dissolution and production of the world by the Lord – the non-liberated souls remaining in a sort of suspended animation in the intervening period), the Lord determines the sort of world each new world is to be with its natural laws and relationships. Thus the Lord exercises his control over the world.

We must note that where the body$_m$ of the Lord *is* a system of some kind, part of the controlling process consists in harmonising so far as this is possible in the context of the natural conditions of the universe and of the co-operation of man, the various inter-related components of that system. This feature of the controlling process takes account of a meaning of 'yam' (the verbal root from which 'niyantṛ' (i.e. 'controller') is got) prevalent in that seminal religious text for all Vedāntins (Rāmānuja included), the Bhagavadgītā, in connection with the ātman's integrating and harmonising of its body and bodily components.

From the microcosmic point of view, the controller is the individual ātman and the thing-controlled its natural (healthy) body. It is common experience that the individual self controls the body for its own ends. For the good soul, however, these ends should be in accord with the legitimate goals and methods of the sacred texts, and in any case subordinate to the highest goal of man – liberation from this world of rebirth. Rāmānuja is keen to acknowledge a core of moral autonomy for the finite ātman, so that it is a 'controller' – a determiner of its destiny – in the true sense. Does not this acknowledgement clash with the claim that the Lord is universal controller of the whole world, of conscious and non-conscious being alike, which Rāmānuja, in traditional theist fashion, is prepared to make? We shall take this question up in due course.

(3) *The principal (śeṣin)/accessory (śeṣa) relationship*

Rāmānuja says: 'This is, in all cases, the relation between principal and accessory: the accessory is that whose nature it is to be given over to the tendency to render due glory to another; that other is the principal.'[1] If under the epistemological aspect of the support/thing-supported relationship we

[1] ayam eva hi sarvatra śeṣaśeṣibhāvaḥ. paragatātiśayādhānecchayopādeyatvam eva yasya svarūpaṃ sa śeṣaḥ paraḥ śeṣī. VedS., para. 121, p. 151.

can say that the $body_m$ exists to serve the natural or (in Brahman's case) self-determined purposes of the $self_m$, here we can say that the very purpose for existing, as it were, of the $body_m$ as accessory to its $self_m$ as principal, is to glorify – to proclaim the importance and superiority of – the latter. This the accessory does, if it is a person, by appropriate forms of subservience to its principal and by conforming to the latter's will. So far as non-conscious being is concerned, the accessory renders glory by just *being* what it is, always presuming, of course, that there is conscious being present to appreciate this.

Again, from the macrocosmic viewpoint, Brahman is the principal of all finite being, his accessory. And finite being exists to render due glory to its Lord, either by being what it is or by that worship of life and thought which fashions more and more in the devotee a 'holy will' in total conformity to the Lord's. In this way of speaking, that is, in terms of the Lord's being principal and of finite being acting as his accessory, nothing can be said to accrue to the Lord; the purpose of the accessory is fulfilled if the Principal is duly allowed to be magnified for the sort of being it is by the accessory's recognition of the sort of being *it* is. In other words, the Lord is aknowledged to be the focus, fulfillment, crown and source of value of the world.

But there is a microcosmic application of the principal/accessory relationship. In this case, the individual ātman is the principal of its accessory, the material body. The material body is meant to 'set off' the jewel that is its inner spirit. And the material body does this by its beauty, its prowess, its various capacities, its subservience to the ātman. Further, in so far as the whole inanimate world can be regarded as an 'extension' of the (human) ātmanic composite – for it is the human ātmanic composite that best encapsulates in this world the principal/accessory relationship – by functioning as the extended $body_m$ of the finite ātman (its $self_m$), the human person becomes the summit of visible creation. This means that the human person in and through its spiritual principle, its ātman, is not only the bestower of meaning to the world in a real sense, but is also the material world's value-giver; more, that it is in some way the seat of value, that it is an end-in-itself.

Well then, we may remark, there seems to be a problem here. How can we say, in one breath as it were, that the Lord is the ultimate 'principal' of creation, the finite ātman existing solely to magnify the Lord as his accessory, and that the individual ātman itself is an end-in-itself, a value-bestower in its own right in this world? This question, like the others, will be dealt with presently as we go on to consider Rāmānuja's theological method.

We have completed our review of what Rāmānuja means by the self-body relationship so central to his thinking. We shall now be able to appreciate how central it is by examining his theological method. We start with the observation that Rāmānuja himself has nowhere explained his method in the

way we propose to do. This is why his theology is so hard to interpret as a *conceptual system*, viz. a coherent and articulate ordering of a great many ideas so as to produce a comprehensive vision of reality in the light of the Transcendent. And there can be no doubt that Rāmānuja intended his thinking to be 'systematic'. We propose to interpret his method by the use of an 'imaginative construct' which we think incorporates all the significant elements of his thinking and which in fact pivots around what is admittedly for Rāmānuja central for his theology: the self-body model. Because of the limitations of space we shall not be able to show here how all the noteworthy facets of his thinking fit into the model as we have interpreted it. As noted before the fuller study has been attempted elsewhere. But I hope enough will be done to indicate how the self-body model comprehends the more salient features of Rāmānuja's thought systematically.

To begin with, Rāmānuja's focal insight and concern with respect to the relationship between God and the world is that this relationship is one of 'identity-in-difference'.[1] He articulates this relationship distinctively in terms of his self-body model. And to do this his method consists in the identifying and then the holding together of a system of polarities. In other words it is this 'system of polarities' which finds expression in the self-body model comprising as it does its three sub-models or component relationships which themselves have, as we have seen, a two-tiered application: in microcosm to the finite ātman and its body_m, and in macrocosm to Brahman and his body_m. It is through the interplay and the inter-relationships of the various polarities of this complex two-tiered structure that the range and depth of Rāmānuja's theology are expressed.

By 'polarity' here I mean a more or less stable tension between two (sometimes more) poles such that this tension is resolvable into two mutually opposing but synchronous tendencies. One tendency is 'centripetal' whereby the poles are attracted to each other; the other is 'centrifugal' keeping the poles apart. Each tendency by itself is destructive of the polarity as a whole, but as simultaneously corrective of each other the tendencies work towards preserving the dynamic equilibrium of the system. The centripetal and centrifugal tendencies comprising a polarity can each be articulated in terms of a distinctive but complementary (to each other) mode of discourse. Each polarity itself is translatable into its own appropriate and more or less self-contained pattern of speech which ultimately, through a set of 'universalising factors', must be integrated into the universe of discourse of the polarity-system as a whole. All this sounds very complicated but we can explain what we mean by Rāmānuja's 'polarity-theology' by illustrating how it works. This can conveniently be done under each of the component-headings of the self-body model.

[1] This is the point of his theology as 'viśiṣṭādvaita' as it later came to be called, namely the non-duality of differenced being.

(*a*) *The support/thing-supported relationship*. Under this heading, in its macrocosmic application, Rāmānuja's understanding of Brahman's originative causality with respect to the world finds expression. To understand the polarity-method in this context, we must first consider briefly what Rāmānuja's position is on Brahman as 'originative cause'.

In this respect Rāmānuja regarded Brahman as being, at the same time, the 'substrative cause (upādāna kāraṇa)' and the 'efficient cause (nimitta kāraṇa)' of finite being. Let us look at each type of divine causality in turn. Now Rāmānuja (and the other Vedāntins) would find quite unsatisfactory a doctrine of 'creatio', i.e. the production of the world by God out of nothingness, such as has traditionally been held in Christianity. To hold such a belief would do scant justice to those scriptural texts and images (and to the living religious experience encapsulated by them) which point to Brahman as the very ground of being, as the source from which finite reality emerges, in which it subsists, and into which it is finally re-absorbed.[1] Rāmānuja wanted no ontological, 'creational' gap between the infinite source of being and its finite effects. It was in the concept of the 'substrative cause' that he, like other Vedāntins, found what he was looking for. The substrative cause is that out of which the effect is produced. A well-known empirical example for the Vedāntins was the clay out of which the clay pot (the effect) was produced. From the point of view of the world's existence, Brahman is the substrative cause of the world. The world is produced out of him, continues to subsist in him, and is finally re-funded into him. In this way Brahman 'supports' the world, the thing-supported, which 'cannot be realized apart from' him. Indeed, to preserve this insight, Rāmānuja is prepared to talk of Brahman in his creative aspect as the 'causal Brahman' and of the produced world as the 'effected Brahman'.[2] Now this way of talking can be said to be 'centripetal' in that it tends to collapse the Brahman-pole and the world-pole into each other by its 'kenotic' emphasis; that is, it empties out, as it were, Brahman's reality into the world, identifying the reality of the cause too closely with that of the effect. By seeking to do justice to the utter derivativeness of the world's being, it threatens the transcendence of that being's originative cause.

Now Rāmānuja (and his colleagues) were well aware of this threat to their God. As a corrective they spoke of Brahman also as the efficient cause of the world. The efficient cause is that cause which, being different from its effects, initiates and sustains the action which brings them into being. In our empirical example, the potter is the efficient cause of the clay pot(s).[3] For Rāmānuja Brahman was also the efficient cause of produced being and as such was not to be identified with finite being. Brahman's initiating causal

[1] See, e.g., Taittirīya Upaniṣad III. I. I for an important śruti reference encapsulating this idea.

[2] Cf., e.g. the discussion under ShBh. I. 4. 23, p. 386, li. 18–22; Th., p. 399.

[3] In empirical experience the efficient cause is numerically distinct from the substrative cause. In Brahman's case Rāmānuja was keen to identify the two.

action was sovereign (that is, it was intrinsically and extrinsically unnecessitated) and in need of no accessory causal agency of any kind. Such causality was 'supportive' of finite being in that without it finite being could not be 'realised', could not be translated from potency to act. Now to talk of Brahman as the world's efficient cause could be regarded as talking 'centrifugally' since, in so far as the efficient cause is different from its effect, the Brahman-pole and the world-pole are sought to be kept apart. The way is thus open for Brahman's supreme transcendence to be preserved.

Thus here we have within one and the same context of divine originative causality, a polarity expressed in terms of two modes of discourse: a 'centripetal' one and a 'centrifugal' one. The centripetal mode of discourse emphasises Brahman's identity with the world, the centrifugal way of speaking his difference from the world. Neither mode of discourse within the polarity is sought to be eventually done away with, as for example, Śaṃkara did. Śaṃkara also accepted that Brahman was the world's substrative as well as efficient cause – but only from the point of view of the conditioned Brahman (i.e. the saguṇa Brahman), Brahman viewed through the illusory spectacles of duality. From the final standpoint there is no ground for polarity discourse since there is but one reality (the nirguṇa Brahman) – non-dual, relationless and ineffable. Rāmānuja on the contrary affirmed the permanent value of polarity-discourse in theology. In fact, it is distinctive of his theological method to identify, on the basis of an equal hermeneutic status given to all kinds of scriptural texts (dualist, non-dualist etc.) and the religious experience grounded on these, a range of polarities and to use their (mutually) counterbalancing modes of discourse, within the general framework of the self-body model, to articulate and comprehend the unique sort of identity-in-difference he sought to preserve between his God and the world. Thus though describing Brahman as substrative and efficient cause is not distinctive to his system (we have seen that Śaṃkara also speaks thus – though in a limited way), to identify it as a polarity is distinctive, the more so when we consider that under this heading Rāmñuja works out a number of other polarities which we cannot mention here.

There is a further corrective he applies, by his distinctive method of shifting our perspectives on Brahman and the world, to counterbalance the polarity of Brahman's originative causality which after all on the whole does emphasize the utter derivativeness, the non-substantival nature, of the world's reality. This takes account of the 'second-tier' of the self-body model, viz. the supportive relationship pertaining to the individual ātman as the self_m of its material body. From this point of view we experience ineluctably our non-sublatable substantival reality in and through the relationship we have with our bodies (this Rāmānuja seeks to establish by an analysis of conscious and other 'embodied' experience). To come back then to a question raised earlier, one's individual reality is not swallowed up by and in that of Brahman.

(*b*) *The controller/thing-controlled relationship.* Here too a polarity is to be discerned. From the theological point of view this sub-model has as its dominant idea the Lord's absolute control over the world, and his guiding it to its true destiny. A chief way of doing this is by his considering the unmatured karma of the previous world(s) and by his fashioning the world-to-be accordingly. This engenders a mode of discourse fully alerted to the sovereign, unthwartable will of the Lord. The world is in danger of being viewed as a pre-determined series of events, and human persons, the true representatives of this world, run the risk of being evacuated of any moral autonomy (in the context of a deterministic Calvinist-type ethic). The tendency in this perspective is centripetal in that no room is left for genuine chance, contingency and (moral) freedom in the world – the world has no 'character' of its own in the face of the Lord's absolute sovereignty. As a corrective Rāmānuja espouses a centrifugal mode of discourse in which divine grace and divine 'incarnational' descents come into play. This way of speaking implies moral and physical freedom on the part of finite agents to respond to the Lord's love in human love (cf. the role of bhakti). A polar opposition between the Lord and the world is thus set up, with all the language, imagery and behaviour that this implies. Again, both (centripetal and centrifugal) modes of theological grammar are to be held together in the life of the devotee, each with a validity in its own right. Again, another facet of the identity-in-difference relation between God and the world is being proclaimed by Rāmānuja.

A further corrective to the centripetal tendency comes from regarding the self-body model under this heading in its microcosmic aspect. Here the individual self experiences its genuine moral and physical freedom in its (albeit limited) control over its material body (which is its body_m). The autonomy of the human self is not swamped by God's absolute, universal causality.

(*c*) *The principal/accessory relationship.* Speaking macrocosmically, the centripetal force is supplied by the insight (and its grammar) of the Lord being the supreme End, Focus and Value of creation, and of the world, conscious beings included, existing solely to glorify him.[1] And which student of religion can deny that the literature of all the great theistic religions is replete with this insight? 'God is everything, we are nothing; He must become greater and greater, we less and less'. The problem here is that if such talk is taken to its logical extreme, man ceases to have any intrinsic value and becomes a mere means, not only in relationships where human beings are concerned, but in relationship with God too. And this Rāmānuja rejects.

The corrective, i.e., the centrifugal mode of discourse is supplied by the

[1] Often enough, especially in his commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, a commentary that is more devotional than philosophical, Rāmānuja states that it is the self's sole function/essence/delight to be the Lord's accessory. Cf., e.g. his comments under Gītā 7. 19.

self-body model here in its microcosmic application. In the finite ātman's relation to its body$_m$ (i.e. its material body) the former knows and is assured of its intrinsic spiritual value qua ātman, a knowledge first derived from the scriptures but then experienced in union with the Lord. The ātmanic composite as an end-in-itself cannot be treated as a mere means, even by God himself.

For Rāmānuja the rationale underlying this affirmation is derived from his view that we participate most directly in Brahman in and through our ātmans; we share his basic spiritual nature in a relation of identity-in-difference whereby we are his bodies$_m$ and he our self$_m$.

We can conclude this brief treatment of the way Rāmānuja's polarity-theology works with the observation that the whole system is bound together in the first place by the two over-arching terms/concepts i.e. 'self' (or 'ensouler', namely śarīrin) and 'body' (śarīra) and then by the somewhat less universal ideas and language contained in the three submodels, applied macrocosmically and microcosmically. Through these more and less universal 'stepping-stones' of ideas/terms connecting resonances are set up between particular polarities along which the mind can move freely integrating the whole. We can now pass on to the next section.

II

In this section we shall comment briefly on how Christian thought and practice might profit from the content and method of Rāmānuja's body-of-God theology. I am assuming that there is no need to justify the desirability, indeed the need, for Christian dialogue with non-Christian religions, Hinduism included.[1] Since space is short, it will be convenient to make our observations in the form of points.

(1) I submit that it would be theologically fertile, both conceptually and devotionally, for Christians to regard the world, and its individual components, as God's body. No doubt in the theological articulation and development of this idea, certain aspects of 'body' would have to be eschewed (e.g. the term's explicit organic connotation) but other aspects, bolstered by an appropriate imagery, e.g. the great *intimacy* between spirit and body, the bodily *indwelling* by its spirit, the sense of mutual *belongingness* between the two, applied theologically, could be liturgically evocative and devotionally sustaining. After all, in Christian tradition there is a precedent of a kind for 'body-talk' in a divine context, in the doctrine of the 'mystical body' (especially in traditional Roman Catholic theology). The New Testament epistles also are not afraid to use body-imagery in connection with the faithful's relationship to Christ.

[1] I have indicated the outlines of a justification of this kind in my article 'Through a prism brightly' in *Vidyajyoti*, (April 1980) (from Vidyajyoti, Institute of Religious Studies, 23 Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi 110054).

Further, Rāmānuja's body-of-God theology, in its very choice of the 'body' term (i.e. 'śarīra') looks positively on the world of materiality. In the main, Christians have tended to reflect this positive outlook, but Rāmānuja's articulation introduces a much-needed note of radical ambiguity to the 'body' idea. Though in its microcosmic application the self-body relation is intended to be a benign one – the body_m furthering the ends of its self_m and in the process coming to fulfillment – theoretically the relationship remains an open one in that the body_m (really, in this context, one's material body, but by extension, the material world) may 'rebel' (in terms of natural opaqueness/resistance to technological control or penetration, through sickness, disease etc. and even death) and thwart the true goal(s) of its self_m. Matter, thus, even in its most intimate associations with man, has a feature of inherent 'explosiveness' which is potentially dangerous to man. As a result, matter has to be understood, by its self_m, for what it is and what it can do – its 'co-operation' has to be sought. Allied to this insight is a much-needed corrective for the western world especially (but also for the east which is beginning to ape the west here), in connection with its Nature-exploitative and anti-Ecological ethos derived from Genesis 1: 26–30. We subdue and dominate, rather than co-operate with, our bodies_m at our peril, as we are beginning to discover.

Much of all this has special relevance for the future Church in India. The Indian Church in the past has sought no rootage, theologically, devotionally or liturgically, in the local Hindu tradition, 'great' and 'small' (though positive strides in this regard are now being taken especially in Roman Catholic circles). As a result, for the most part, the Church is regarded (and this is now being recognised as a feature of its self-image) as an alien in what should by now be its home. I suggest that Rāmānuja's body-of-God theme provides a rich source, in the ways indicated, for the Indian Church's 'inculturation'. It would be all the more possible, in its Indian context, for the Church to make use in its liturgy and devotional practice of appropriate images and language from this theme.

(2) Looking at, now, the more particular aspects of the self-body model under its three component headings there is clearly much food for dialogic thought. The stress on the utter derivativeness of the world from God, both as to existence and intelligibility (distinctively through the notion of the 'substrative cause'), the insight into the Lord as absolute controller of world and individual, and the emphasis on the Lord's being the crowning glory of creation, counter-balanced from the microcosmic viewpoint, by the finite ātman's being in its own right a support, controller and principal of its body_m,[1] both challenge and echo Christian thought. This brings us to the next point.

[1] Rāmānuja's philosophical anthropology faces a potentially grave problem which the Christian adaptation need not face. Though we have pointed out earlier that Rāmānuja theologizes as if the human

(3) Here let us make some observations on Rāmānuja's method. As we have seen this consists in, within the framework of the component submodels of the self-body model in its two-tiered application, the setting-up of a network of polarities (each with its distinctive mode of discourse). The point of this method is, not to do away with eventually the tension between polarities by dissolving one or other polarity, but to preserve the polarities as a system in dynamic and creative equilibrium (with the recognition that each polarity has a validity in its own right). For this method to make sense the referent being subjected to articulation and analysis besides being a multifaceted whole must in the last resort be recognized to elude exhaustive conceptual analysis, an 'entity' in some way inexhaustible in its secrets and reluctant to yield them (e.g. God, man, the Church). This is why Rāmānuja's method is a *theological* method par excellence dealing as it does with the 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' par excellence. Further, this method must work on the deliverances of *experience*. Thus God is experienced as the ground of our being, 'in whom we live and move and have our being'; yet we also experience our own substantival realities. God is experienced as the sole raison d'être for our existence; yet we experience the inalienable ends-that-we-are-in-ourselves, and so on. The answer is not to dissolve away one or other seemingly conflicting limb of these paradoxes by a seamless logic that seeks to do away with paradox altogether (as the determinists do in resolving the paradox of human moral autonomy and God's universal causality), but to acknowledge paradox for its true value by 'polarity-theology' such as Rāmānuja has attempted.

This is not an invitation to wallow in 'mystery' or to indulge in 'soft thinking'. Any serious student of Rāmānuja cannot but be impressed by the rigour of his analyses *within* the various polarities, according to an uncompromising logic whose rules (if not premises) apply with equal strictness throughout the whole system. It is rather a serious and humble recognition of paradox and mystery as ineluctable facts of human experience. Surely Rāmānuja the theologian is offering us something, in the method and content of his body-of-God theme, that we could ponder with much profit.

ātman-matter composite is qualitatively superior to sub-human ātman-matter composites (even some logical evidence in the form of indirect arguments can be adduced to support this stance) his acceptance of the theory of rebirth (inclusive of ātmanic embodiment in sub-human forms of life) and his lack of critical treatment of the implications of this theory for issues like determining personal identity in general and intrinsic human value over and above non-human animal worth, leave important unclarities in his system.

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A DEATH-BLOW TO ŚAṄKARA'S NON-DUALISM? A DUALIST REFUTATION

I. INTRODUCTION

Many of us, and I am no exception, have been led to assume, almost unconsciously, that Śaṅkara is India's greatest philosopher and that the non-dualist philosophy he consolidated, Advaita Vedānta, is the supreme spiritual philosophy of India, if not of the whole world. Dualist (Dvaita) opponents like Madhva, on the other hand, have usually been appreciated very little, if at all. Several of my colleagues think of Madhva as a reactionary, if brilliant, theist whose philosophy best serves as a foil to Śaṅkara's. Madhva, it almost seems, is studied not for his own philosophical virtues but as a means the better to appreciate Śaṅkara's. I believe that we must weigh more carefully the dualist position, particularly its trenchant critique of non-dualism. We may discover in the process that Śaṅkara, whatever else he was – brilliant stylist, mystic *par excellence*, deft polemicist – was not the originator or consolidator of anything like an internally consistent metaphysics.

Vādirāja, a sixteenth-century Kerala poet-philosopher who championed Madhva's dualism,[1] believes that he has reduced Śaṅkara's non-dualist Vedānta, particularly as it has been shaped by its later proponents, to absurdity at a crucial point. It is this refutation – and it is but one of a number that I might have selected from those developed by dualist thinkers – that we will examine here.

Śaṅkara's system is, of course, built around the central affirmation that the essence, or true Self, or Ātman, of each of us is ultimately identical with the one Reality, Brahman, the nature of which is eternal, unimpeded bliss-consciousness. Because, however, avidyā, or the principle of illusion which makes the object-world appear, is superimposed on this Ātman, the bliss-consciousness of our essential being is not apparently experienced; this consciousness exists for each of us, as it were, embryonically; it awaits the moment when it is to be freed (mukta), at which time it will exist unimpededly as the

[1] B. N. K. Sharma calls Vādirāja, who wrote a monumental defence of the Dualist Vedānta in a work called *Yuktimallikā*, 'the most popular and enthusiastically applauded writer in Dvaita literature' (*A History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta and Its Literature.* II [Bombay: Booksellers' Publishing Co., 1961], 192).

pure, undifferentiated bliss-consciousness that is Brahman. In the meantime it exists in its unholy alliance with avidyā and *seems* to be other than it is; it seems to be an individual entity continually buffeted by a flux of experience ranging from the most painful to the most happy. It seems, in a word, to be in bondage. This 'seeming' entity is called *jīva* by Śaṅkara; jīva, which is usually translated 'soul', is a complex of spirit and matter; it is the Ātman conditioned by the limiting adjuncts of the person's mind and body.[1] As such, it is the agent and enjoyer of experience.[2] In reality, Śaṅkara believes, this jīva and its experiences are as illusory as avidyā itself, for they cannot exist without avidyā. That which underlies this jīva and which ultimately the jīva is, namely the Ātman, is of course real, but the jīva as such and all its experiences, which seem to us now so real, are ultimately purely imaginary and will be utterly extinguished at liberation.

The dualists Madhva and Vādirāja, in contrast, hold that the jīva, which they regard as the spiritual nucleus which enlivens the body and is the person's true identity, is real and will not be extinguished at liberation; that there is no such entity as either the Ātman or the jīva in the Śaṅkarian sense; and that Brahman is radically different from the real jīva. Furthermore, Brahman is a personal God - the creator of the universe (not *ex nihilo*, however), the lover of his devotees, the administrator of the law of karma - and not an impersonal bliss-consciousness.

In spite of their diametric opposition on these major issues, Śaṅkara and Madhva, and their respective followers, agreed on many details - and their agreements will be important for an understanding of Vādirāja's critique about to follow. Both accepted the doctrine of karma, both believed that souls were rewarded for good or proper actions (dharma) in a temporary paradise (svarga) and were punished for evil or improper actions (adharma) in a frightful domain (naraka) not unlike popular Christian notions of hell. Both, moreover, held positions at least vaguely akin to what Western philosophers mean by 'mind-body dualism'. The universe, each thought, was ultimately reducible to two opposing yet interlocking principles: spiritual reality (cit) and physical existence (jaḍa). Spiritual reality was invariably characterized by consciousness; physical existence, or matter, by unconsciousness. There was a difference, however – and both again were in agreement – between the mental apparatus and consciousness: the 'mind' (manas or antaḥkaraṇa) was for each made of matter, though extremely subtle matter, and as such was radically distinguishable from the spiritual consciousness, the cit, which suffused the mind and gave it life. While it is true that all this that the two philosophers could agree on was from Śaṅkara's point of view only empiri-

[1] See M. K. V. Iyer, *Advaita Vedānta According to Śaṁkara* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 117–18.
[2] See Śaṅkara, *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with the Commentary of Śaṅkara*, trans. George Thibaut, 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 1960.

cally or conventionally true or real (vyāvahārika), while from Madhva's it was absolutely true or real (pāramārthika), this distinction, as I will show below, will not directly impinge upon the rebuttal about to begin.

We are now in a better position to assess Vādirāja's rebuttal of non-dualist metaphysics. We will examine specifically fourteen verses (anuṣṭubhs) from his *Nyāyaratnāvalī* (or *Jewel-Necklace of Logical Arguments*),[1] a work of 901 verses dedicated almost entirely to the piecemeal destruction of non-dualism. I have commented on the text wherever necessary for clarity, especially where the argument being refuted is not explicitly stated. This commentary might in a few places seem foreign to those who know Śaṅkara well but are not familiar with the tradition built around him; for Vādirāja is opposing specifically the non-dualist tradition as it had been developed in his day (sixteenth century), and my explication will accordingly reflect this latter-day non-dualism; fortunately for our purposes this tradition is in its essentials the same as Śaṅkara's. The commentary may also seem party-spirited. I should say at the outset that my intention in the commentary has not been to balance Vādirāja's claims against his opponents', but simply to explicate Vādirāja's argumentation. At the conclusion of the work I will present the non-dualist defence, and in Śaṅkara's own words. The reader will at once notice, incidentally, that Vādirāja's treatise is written as if the non-dualist adversary, who is addressed in the second person, were assumed to be the reader.

II. VĀDIRĀJA'S TEXT WITH COMMENTARY

'If the Supreme Being and a soul are identical (as you claim), then the soul baking in hell (naraka)[2] for its sins will experience the harsh pain; and the Blessed One, dwelling eternally in the heart (here meaning the soul) in order to incite both the activity and the experience of this (soul), would (Himself) suffer by virtue of its suffering.'

He begins the rebuttal by acknowledging along with his adversary, the non-dualist, that certain souls suffer in hell, according to the law of karma, for their sins. But if that is the case, he goes on to say, then non-dualists are in for an embarrassment. For they take Yājñavalkya literally when he says, 'On the heart, Your Majesty, all beings are supported. The heart, verily, Your Majesty, is the Supreme Brahman.'[3] Thus they are compelled to draw the

[1] None of Vādirāja's many works has been translated before. His corpus is a goldmine for the Sanskritist with philosophical interests. I have translated only the first section (or 421 verses) of the *Nyāyaratnāvalī*.

[2] Naraka, usually translated 'hell', is one of the devices by which souls which have led wicked lives are justly punished. As in Christianity, it is popularly regarded as a fiery place where the guilty are tormented. Most Hindus, however (and Vādirāja's own school is a notable exception), regard hell as temporary – really more of a purgatory than a hell.

[3] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.1.7, in S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953), p. 252.

conclusion, Vādirāja claims, that Brahman itself must suffer the very pains of hell that the soul (or 'heart'), with which it is identical, is suffering. And how can Brahman, which non-dualists regard as unimpeded bliss-consciousness, do that?

'It is proper to hold that only the soul can sin but that matter cannot sin. Ask yourself whether expiation (for sins) is proper to a man or to a can!'

Vādirāja is wary lest his non-dualist opponent, in order to protect the Ātman from the imputation of sin and suffering due to it, since either of these would hardly befit Brahman said to be identical with it, should maintain in the course of argumentation that it is not the soul (jīvātman) which sins (or commits any act, for that matter), but rather the antaḥkaraṇa, or inner mental organ. Vādirāja reminds his opponent that non-dualism maintains that this organ is an extremely transparent *material* stuff; by itself, therefore, it is not conscious, it is not intelligent; as superimposed on Pure Consciousness (Ātman-Brahman), it merely *conditions* this consciousness; it may be considered as the lens focusing the light of consciousness.[1]

It would be useless, therefore, for the non-dualist to point to the antaḥkaraṇa as the seat of sin and suffering. Can matter experience the suffering of hell? If so, then one may as well say that a can is capable of suffering as well as a man.[2]

'Furthermore, the body's inner mental organ and the like (i.e. buddhi, ahaṁkāra) cannot be the seat of sin, as you would require, because in deep (dreamless) sleep, when everything (except the Consciousness of Bliss) is dissolved, the basis of sin would happen not to exist!'

Non-dualists distinguish the blissful Ātman that is our 'real Self' from the antaḥkaraṇa ('inner mental organ'), manas ('mind'), buddhi ('intellect') and ahaṁkāra ('ego'), all of which are matter and in themselves unconscious. They say that ordinary consciousness is a result of the reflection of pure consciousness on these material instruments of perception. Now non-dualists regard the state of dreamless sleep as the one instance in the life of an ordinary man when Brahman-Consciousness shines through unhindered: 'According to them, no one has the experience of "I" in the deep-sleep state.'[3] In other words, all of the machinery of ordinary consciousness is dissolved.

Vādirāja retorts that this teaching is inconsistent with the karma-doctrine as interpreted by non-dualists, at least as long as they insist on regarding the

[1] See Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 76–7, for a detailed explanation of the relation of consciousness to antaḥkaraṇa.

[2] Actually Vādirāja asks the non-dualist to consider whether a man or an *arrow*, not a can, is able to suffer. But since the verse in Sanskrit is especially effective because *narāṇām* (men) and *śarāṇām* (arrows) rhyme, I have rendered the rhyme rather than the literal meaning into English.

[3] K. Narain, *A Critique of Mādhva Refutation of the Śāṁkara School of Vedānta* (Allahabad: Udayana Publications, 1964), p. 71.

antaḥkaraṇa as somehow the seat of sin. His argument is the same as Vyāsatīrtha's, reported by Narain:

The denial of the ego in the deep-sleep state entails the discontinuity of the 'I' that enters this realm of oblivion with the result that it is difficult to be convinced that the same sleeper has awakened. In other words, the ego in the deep sleep would make the recognition of personality impossible...Because the individual before sleep was a different personality, all his actions must be supposed to have remained fruitless. Not only this, the enjoyments of the awakened individual would appear to be due to no *karma* at all.[1]

Simply stated, the existence of karma is inexplicable if the seat of sin is the egoistic mental organ; for this organ is said to dissolve during deep sleep, and the new one that would replace it upon awakening would be discontinuous with the first.

'Moreover, since this (antaḥkaraṇa) is dissolved, the dissolution (in turn) of deep sleep (and subsequent return of ordinary consciousness) would be inexplicable; for, as the clear-sighted say, it is karma which is the cause of everything which happens.'

He says that if the antaḥkaraṇa, the seat of sin and repository of karma, is dissolved, then the routine karmic effect of waking would in itself be inexplicable. There should be an endless sleep!

'Furthermore, you hold that Ignorance clings to the reflection (of Pure Consciousness, namely the soul); (in that case) certainly sin and the rebirths marked by duḥkha (suffering) which result from it would pervade the soul itself. Talk it over with children: "What is responsible for doing right and wrong?', (They'll tell you!)"

Vādirāja is here asking the non-dualists merely to heed the consequences of their own teaching. If the soul is, as they say, the locus of ignorance (avidyā), then the soul itself must experience the effects of this ignorance, which are sin and the round of rebirths resulting from sin. The mechanical, insentient antaḥkaraṇa (mental organ) may indeed be a necessary cause of sin and so forth, but certainly it does not *experience* the sin or its consequences; only the soul can do that. Even children, he concludes, know the difference between spirit and matter. They know that it is the conscious soul itself which commits sin and suffers the consequences. Furthermore:

'A particular momentary, perishable thought is not (the same as) the result (of it existing) at a different time. A present mental state (buddhi) is the doer; another, existing at a different time, experiences (the deed's karmic fruit): indeed, one commits sins, another suffers the consequence! A man of wisdom

[1] *Ibid.* p. 73. See Dasgupta, *Indian Philosophy*, IV (1949), 236, for a shorter exposition of the same argument, and p. 243 for a non-dualist counter-argument.

would ask (at this point): How could the extinction of what has been caused and the emergence of what is uncaused possibly come about? Therefore the soul itself is both the doer and the enjoyer (or sufferer of consequences) since it (alone) is permanent.'

Vādirāja says that if the antaḥkaraṇa, which is non-spiritual and is ultimately no more than a convenient designation of a series of mental states (here labelled buddhis),[1] is the doer and experiencer rather than the Ātman, then the law of karma would become unmanageable. For the mental states which collectively make up the antaḥkaraṇa are *discrete* – the percept of a pot, for example, is both temporally and qualitatively different from that of a piece of cloth – and thus there is no principle of continuity which enables us to contend that the first percept is related to the second. More to the point, there is no basis for asserting a relationship between the mental state of a particular evil desire and the mental state of pain said to be karmically produced by the desire. The law of karma, says our author, would be made a shambles of, for this law is grounded on the assumption that whatever does an action itself reaps the consequences of that action.

It is necessary then that there be a principle of continuity, he says, if the karma-doctrine is to apply. It is necessary to regard one and the same thing as both the doer and the enjoyer. What might that be? It could be only the jīvātman he says, for it alone persists. It alone weaves the disparate mental events into a single tapestry. But, of course, if the jīvātman is the actor and enjoyer/sufferer, it would obviously have to be different from the ever-blissful Brahman-Consciousness, and non-dualism would have to be abandoned.

Vādirāja's refutation now takes a somewhat different direction; he begins by defining several important terms used by non-dualists to explain perception:

'This (soul) has (so you say) its location in the body; the eye (seeing), and so forth, is the stimulus; the antaḥkaraṇa is the mind (manas); the buddhi is but (this mind's momentary) agitation consisting in a thought (or percept).'

He says that non-dualists understand, first, that the soul, which by itself is one with Brahman, is located in and pervades the body;[2] the body is its sphere of influence. He then notes that the senses are for the purpose of stimulating responses within the body-soul complex. Next he asserts that non-dualism treats the antaḥkaraṇa, or 'mind', whose nature we have already

[1] Non-dualists often speak of '*the* buddhi', by which they usually mean the willing or affirming capacity of the mind. At other times they speak of '*a* buddhi', by which they mean a momentary particularization of the buddhi; in this sense, Dasgupta tells us, '*Buddhi*, or intellect, means the mental *state* [italics mine] of determination or affirmation (*niścayātmika antaḥkaraṇa-vṛtti*)', and is synonymous with the better known *antaḥkaraṇa-vṛtti*, or 'mental modification' (*Indian Philosophy*, II, 75).

[2] Śaṇkara of course holds that the soul is ultimately all-pervading and infinite, for it is ultimately only the Ātman.

learned something of, as functionally indistinguishable from the mental category known as manas. Finally he defines the buddhi in the manner already familiar to us. He now continues:

'The percept which consists in acute irritation resulting from the contact of one of the senses, the nose for example, with a fetid taste or smell is no more than this buddhi (you say). But it is always the Ātman (or Self, identical to Brahman) whose nature it is to actually *experience* the affliction, your doctrine says (in effect), while the buddhi is only the impression of the external datum conveyed by the external senses (in this case, the sense of smell).'

Having shown above the absurdity of making the material machinery of consciousness the doer and enjoyer, Vādirāja now intends to show why it is equally absurd to regard the Ātman as the doer and enjoyer. He begins by refining and more fully developing the non-dualist account of experience. What he here says is corroborated by N. K. Devaraja, one of Śaṅkara's better interpreters, who writes:

All appearances hang round the light of consciousness. The *Ātman*, however, does not reveal the whole world directly...the objective world is experienced only when illumined by the light of...the *buddhi*-consciousness.[1]

And again:

Ātman is caught in experience only when it is associated with the internal organ and its modes. The *Ātman* wrongly identifies itself with the *buddhi* and its modes, the result being its having to move in both the worlds.[2]

What Śaṅkara is saying is that the Ātman and the buddhi *together* account for experience: the buddhi of the antaḥkaraṇa knows nothing by itself; the Ātman without the buddhi knows only the bliss of Brahman-consciousness; but together - somehow - they know the experiences common to men.

Now Vādirāja has all along been insisting on clarity and intelligibility. First he showed how fruitless it was to regard the antaḥkaraṇa as the seat of experience. In any case, the buddhi, as interpreted by non-dualism, isn't the actual experiencer, but is rather the conveyor, or facilitator, of the experience. But that leaves only the Ātman, or soul, as the experiencer:

'Consequently the soul alone would have the experience labelled "the direct perception of the stream of torment found in hell". If not, you put an end to (your own) orthodox teaching!'

Only by implication, of course. For the non-dualist, of course, does not explicitly make the soul, which he believes to be one with Brahman, the sufferer in hell. Nothing, in fact, could be further fromh is intentions. But how can he avoid this conclusion? Vādirāja pleads. Either the soul is the

[1] *An Introduction to Śaṅkara's Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Dass, 1962), p. 101.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 101–2.

experiencer or the antaḥkaraṇa is the experiencer. But the non-dualist, after a prod from his opponent, admits himself that the material antaḥkaraṇa by itself lacks consciousness, that it is merely an instrument of consciousness, that it is, so to speak, a 'pill of experience' which the soul must swallow. So that clearly leaves the soul as the experiencer. How could it be otherwise? And what disastrous consequences for non-dualism, given the soul's supposed identity with Brahman, if the soul *is* the experiencer! The only sensible alternative, then, is to admit that the experiencing soul and Brahman are *different*; in other words, are related dualistically.

'Since the Supreme (Brahman) and an individual soul, (although according to you) situated in the very same limiting adjunct (body, antaḥkaraṇa, etc.), are intrinsically different, it is therefore ridiculous to speak of an identity between the two.'

Vādirāja concludes that there can no longer be any doubt that Brahman and the spiritual entity existing within and quickening a man's body are intrinsically different. Therefore non-dualism, which teaches by implication, as Vādirāja is confident he has shown, the contemptible and sacrilegious doctrine of Brahman's identity with souls that sin and suffer, must be rejected once and for all.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The intent of Vādirāja's argumentation is clear. What in each of us, he asks, sins and suffers? Is it the antaḥkaraṇa? Impossible; for material, non-intelligent matter cannot sin – as even the non-dualist is forced to admit. Furthermore, even if *per impossibile* it were somehow the seat of sin, the law of karma would become unintelligible; for the antaḥkaraṇa is but a series of thought-moments, or buddhis, each lasting only as long as the thought itself: it would flout the karmic law if one thought-moment were made to pay for the sin of an altogether different one.[1] Is the sinner and sufferer, then, the *Ātman*, the spiritual principle limited by the adjuncts of body and antaḥkaraṇa? If so, then, since the Ātman is identical to Brahman, Brahman itself would have to sin and suffer. And that, of course, is unacceptable by anyone's standards regardless of what he precisely means by Brahman. What then sins and suffers? Must it not ultimately be one or the other - either the antaḥkaraṇa or the Ātman? If the non-dualist, looking for an answer, were to point to the *jīva* in contradistinction to the Ātman as the sufferer, that would amount to an evasion; for the jīva, as he conceives it, is nothing but the Ātman in association with the body and antaḥkaraṇa, or, as M. K. V. Iyer puts it, 'Brahman in empirical dress'.[2] And since the intelligent or conscious aspect

[1] The position that Vādirāja is attacking here resembles Nāgasena's in the *Questions of Milinda* (see Lucien Stryk, ed., *World of the Buddha* [New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1969], pp. 89–99).
[2] *Advaita Vedānta*, p. 117.

of the jīva *is* the Ātman, it is clear that the jīva's pain is ultimately the Ātman's. The only remaining alternative, it would seem, would be to hold that the *experience* of pain can exist without an *experiencer*, but this Buddhist answer Śaṅkara himself forcibly rejects.

Let us now look at Śaṅkara's own analysis of pain to see if it withstands Vādirāja's and, in general, the Dualist rebuttal. Śaṅkara writes, 'The pain of the individual soul...is not real, but imaginary, caused by the error consisting in the non-discrimination of (the Self from) the body, senses, and other limiting adjuncts which are due to name and form, the effects of Nescience.'[1] In another place he says that 'the soul does not really suffer', although as far as the 'phenomenal world' goes 'we may admit the relation of sufferer and suffering just as it is observed, and need neither object to it nor refute it'.[2] All this amounts to saying that the jīva's suffering is merely apparent, not real. The beginningless transmigratory careers of the infinite numbers of jīvas are the stuff of mere seeming: the joy and pain, the rewards and punishments due to karma, are merely apparent, not real. More precisely, they have a conventional (vyāvahārika) reality only, not an ultimately true (pāramārthika) reality.

I do not believe that these considerations invalidate Vādirāja's rebuttal. For the fact still remains that the jīva experiences pain. Whether the pain is imaginary or not is irrelevant, for an imagined snake causes as great a fright as a real snake. And what does it mean to say that the jīva does not *really* suffer, but may be said to suffer 'as far as the phenomenal world goes'? I know of no distinction between *suffering* and *seeming to suffer*: who has ever *seemed* to suffer who did not *really* suffer? Suffering is of its nature a subjective state, and thus to make a distinction between 'objective' suffering and 'subjective' suffering is invalid, for there is no such thing as 'objective' suffering: it is, to use the Indian idiom, a hare's horn. It is invalid, therefore, to hold that the soul does not *really* suffer but only *seems* to suffer, as Śaṅkara holds. We are in the end left with the fact of suffering and the fact of a sufferer. And since according to Śaṅkara this jīva (the 'seeming' sufferer) is really just the Ātman, and since the phrase 'seeming suffering' is at best redundant and at worst unintelligible, it is pure legerdemain to hold any view, given Śaṅkara's non-dualist presupposition, but that the Ātman itself *really suffers*. This inescapable conclusion is exactly what Vādirāja has been trying to pin on his non-dualist adversary all along.

I see no legitimate way out for Śaṅkara and non-dualism. Their only escape turns into a *cul-de-sac*: 'imaginary suffering' turns out simply to be suffering. And this suffering, though facilitated by the antaḥkaraṇa, is not the antaḥkaraṇa's; obviously then it is the jīva's, which is to say it is ultimately the Ātman's, which is to say it is Brahman's. So Brahman, whose nature,

[1] Śaṅkara, *Commentary*, II, 64. [2] *Ibid.* I, 379, 381.

according to non-dualism, is pure, undifferentiated bliss-consciousness, has turned into a sufferer: the *reductio ad absurdum* is complete.

In summation, it will not help matters to point to the limiting adjuncts (antaḥkaraṇa, buddhi, etc.) as the sufferers; causes of the suffering they may be, but they are not to be confused with the actual subject of the suffering. Nor will it do to say that whereas the jīva suffers, the Ātman does not; for Śaṅkara makes it clear that the jīva is ultimately the same entity as the Ātman. Nor will it do to speak of the jīvātman's suffering as 'imaginary', for the reasons just elaborated. Nor again will the Buddhist 'solution' suffice. Might there be some *tertium quid* then which suffers? Śaṅkara nowhere advances such a notion for our consideration; what first looks like a halfway-house between Ātman and antaḥkaraṇa, namely jīva, is ultimately identified in the clearest terms with Ātman. Śaṅkara, it is finally clear, has left himself with no *vehicle* for the suffering. It is no wonder he termed suffering 'imaginary'. Unfortunately for his philosophy, however, he is completely incapable of finding a vehicle even for this 'imaginary' suffering. Unless of course it is an 'imaginary' person. But such language trails off into the grey twilight of unintelligibility. Or would some call it, as a last resort, the high noon of mystic brilliance? I do not believe that great mysticism is a legitimate warrant for bad philosophy.

But the title of this work contains a question mark. It may be, who can tell?, that some day I too will 'understand' Śaṅkara, as a few no doubt would say I at present do not. At the moment, however, I am inclined to look at many of those who champion Śaṅkara as themselves failing at that task.[1] But I say this only of those Śaṅkarians who think that Śaṅkara's philosophy is *rationally* sound. With those who see him as a mystic writing in a philosophical guise I have no quarrel. I can only be pleased at Rudolf Otto's understanding of Śaṅkara when he writes that Śaṅkara's concern was 'not metaphysics but a doctrine of salvation'.[2] Otto no doubt overstates his case - for Śaṅkara did not separate the two - but it is clear what Otto is driving at: Śaṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, his major work, ideally should not be read by a philosopher philosophically but by a mystic mystically. The philosopher (and I am talking about the rational analyst), if he is rigorous, will go away disappointed, while the mystic - and I am really talking about the mystic in each of us - will feel that he has been in communication with someone who has *met* the truth even when he has not understood it. What irony there finally is in all this! The dualist, who has better *understood* the truth, gives the impression of not having *met* the truth as directly as the non-dualist with his untenable metaphysics! But that is for another day.

[1] 'There is a general belief amongst many that monism of Śaṅkara presents the final phase of Indian thought...But the readers of the present volume... will realize the strength and uncompromising impressiveness of the dualistic position' (preface by Dasgupta, *Indian Philosophy*, IV, viii).

[2] *Mysticism East and West* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), p. 33 (title of chapter 2).

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Hindu Doubts About God: Towards a Mīmāṃsā Deconstruction

**
Puruṣottama Bilimoria

I. INTRODUCTION*

THE COMMON VIEW is that Hindu philosophy is committed to one of the conceptions of the Transcendent: whether understood as Brahman (the Absolute) of Vedānta metaphysics; or as *Īśvara,* in one of his triune forms of Śiva, Viṣnu, or Brahmā of the sectarian traditions; or as Śakti, an exclusively feminine divinity, such as the terrifying Goddess Kālī of the tantric sects; or perhaps as the divinely sacred offspring, such as the elephant-headed Ganeśa and his brother Kārttikeya. And there are, of course, colorful variations to this wondrous theme, with a profusion of images in the vast pantheon of Hindu gods, goddesses, *avatāras,* partial divine embodiments, and so on. Understandably, then, scholars have attempted to encompass the bulk of Hindu beliefs variously under one of these categories: polytheism, organized polytheism, pantheism, panentheism, henotheism, monotheism, monism, non-dualism, or, even more puzzling, all of these somehow wrapped into one (hence the ubiquitous "Oneness"). By and large, it is assumed that Hinduism progressed from a primitive polytheism (in its pre-Aryan, earthy roots) through henotheism (In Ṛg and Atharva *Vedas*) and monistic idealism (of the *Upaniṣads*), towards a form of monotheism, which the vast majority of Hindus are apparently seen to espouse.[1] Not so well known, partly because of its neglect by Orientalists, is a contrary position that moves away from all such conceptions, and which could also be said to reject "God-talk" altogether; indeed, here we come rather close to atheism (even "a-*theologie*") in the Hindu tradition. This is not merely a whimsical sentiment which could be perfunctorily dismissed as an aberration within the tradition. There seems to be an argument for this contrary position, or at least arguments against those whose theological discourse might persuade them otherwise. In general terms, let us say that there is scope within Hindu philosophy for an articulated

*I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Jocelyn Dunphy for going through a draft of this paper and making a number of useful suggestions.

[1]See, for example, A. L. Basham, "KṚṢṆA," *Religious Traditions* 1 (Oct., 1978), 1–8. More instructive in this context is Basham's erudite survey of "Hinduism" in R. C. Zaehner, ed., *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Living Faiths* (London/Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). Zaehner's works on Hinduism, especially his translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), and his *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), betray a distinctive monotheistic reading of classical Hinduism. Cf. Max Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* (London: Longsman, Green, 1928); and Donald and Jean Johnson, *God and Gods in Hinduism* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1972).

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This reprinted article is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Wilhelm Halbfass, departed May 2000.

critique of all theologies, resulting in the expression of profound doubts about the reality of a supremely divine being, and about the absolutes of metaphysics.

The term "Mīmāṃsā," signifying an exegetical-hermeneutical enterprise and synonymous with the system or school known by this name, is associated with this critique or doubt; I say "doubt" and not the stronger "skepticism" associated with Buddhism, and later with Hume in the West, for reasons that will become clearer in the discussion. To hint at it just a little, I believe the Mīmāṃsā was predisposed towards a deconstruction of "*onto-theo-logos*" of the kind that had emerged from within the broad Indian tradition, but did not develop this into a rigorous program, except to suggest its bare outline.

II. MĪMĀṂSĀ AS *ĀSTIKA*

1. *Āstika* versus *Nāstika*

The Mīmāṃsā is one of the six major "orthodox" schools (*darśanas*) of Hindu philosophical theology. The term used in the tradition for "orthodoxy" is *āstika*, and it is contrasted with *nāstika* or "heterodoxy," or better still, "non-orthodox."

Much debate in Hindu theology centers around whether a particular view or system of thought is *āstika* or *nāstika*. The assumption in the tradition is that to be an *āstika* one must, at the very least, affirm the supremacy of the Veda, the scriptural canon that sets Hinduism apart from all other religions. The corpus of Veda, or *Vedas,* is collectively characterized as *śruti,* "that which is heard" (i.e., having been transmitted orally from many generations past). The Veda constitutes the primary "revelatory" tradition of Brahmanical Hinduism. A secondary or derivative source is characterized as *smṛti,* the "recollected." Those who deny the validity of the Veda are by definition *nāstikas* (literally, not of *āstika*) and comprise, in the broad Indian philosophical tradition, the materialists Cārvāka or Lokāyata, the Ājīvikas, the Jainas, the Buddhists, and an assortment of sophists, skeptics, agnostics, and detractors from the Veda.[2] The Jainas and the Buddhists, in particular, based the authority for their particular beliefs entirely on sources that would be regarded (by orthodox Hindus) as inimical to the authority of the Veda.

2. The Mīmāṃsā as *Āstikas*

The Mīmāṃsā invariably regarded itself as firmly rooted in the *āstika* or mainstream orthodox tradition. Moreover, later Mīmāṃsā followers (post-sixth century C.E.) set out to revive and revivify the *āstika* tradition by giving prominence to Vedic *sādhana* or praxis, which was thought to have waned during the height of Buddhist influence in India. The Hindu sectarian renascence, already gaining strength, was taken advantage of by the Mīmāṃsakas (followers of the

[2]For discussion on these, see Dale Reipe, *The Naturalistic Tradition in Indian Thought,* 1961 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, repr. 1964), chps. 4, 7, 81. On Ājīvikas, see A. L. Basham, *The History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1951). On Jainas, see S. Gopalan, *Outlines of Jainism* (Delhi: Wiley Eastern Pvt. Ltd., 1973); and Y. J. Padmarajiah, *A Comparative Study of the Jaina Theories of Reality and Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

Mīmāṃsā). Although the Buddhist University of Nālanda was still flourishing and there were skilled Buddhist dialecticians around, certain other factors, possibly internal to the Buddhist community, are said to have contributed to the gradual decline of Buddhism after Nāgārjuna's palmy days (c. 150 C.E.).[3]

The Mīmāṃsakas appealed to moral arguments in order to discredit the credibility of Buddhism. Was it, however, necessary for the Mīmāṃsakas to reclaim the territory of Hindu *Dharma* or "Law" with assertions or arguments in favor of belief in God? It seemed not. What concerned them most was that the Vedic culture had been eclipsed.

Kumārila Bhaṭṭa was perhaps the foremost among the Mīmāṃsā revivalists during this period. He lived in the seventh century (some say 590–650 C.E.; others 600–700 C.E.)[4] and was probably a contemporary of the great Buddhist dialectician Dharmakīrti.

While defending the orthodoxy of the Mīmāṃsā, Kumārila was moved to complain that the Mīmāṃsā had, by and large, come to be looked upon as a "heretical" system. To the question "How so?" Kumārila replied that the Mīmāṃsā had been reduced to the status of Lokāyata, or Cārvāka-*darśana,* the system of naturalistic materialism with its patently hedonistic ethic.[5]

Kumārila wanted to resist the incipient tendency to associate the Mīmāṃsā with some form of debased belief in a "this-worldly" reality, and hence to reject identification of the prevalent materialist-naturalistic system(s) with the school he led. Should this, however, be taken to mean that Kumārila wanted to assert or re-assert belief in an "other-worldly" reality, such as a supra-natural order or a supremely transcendent being? No. It seems that his only concern was that the Veda should not be maligned with some corrupt form of naturalism that bordered on materialism and hedonism. (Perhaps he would have been less concerned had Mīmāṃsaka been called "a realist who swears by the Veda"!). In order to regain orthodoxy for Mīmāṃsā, Kumārila had to elevate the status of the Veda (*śāstras*) and make its authority unassailable.

There were two possible ways of rescuing the orthodoxy claimed by the Mīmāṃsā: (a) by attributing the source of the Veda to a supreme divine being, whose very omniscience and omnipotence would sanction the authority of the

[3]Gopinath Kaviraj, Preface to Ganganatha Jha's translation of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's *Tantravārttika,* Bibliotheca Indica 161 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1903–1924); reprinted Sri Garib Das Oriental Series No. 9, 10 (Delhi: Satsguru Publications, 1983), vol. 1, pp. vi–vii.

[4]*Ibid.,* p. vii; and see Umesha Miśra, in Appendix to Ganganatha Jha, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā in Its Sources (Varanasi: Banares Hindu Univ., 1964), pp. 21–22.

[5]Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, *Ślokavārttika* (*tarkapāda*), I.i.#10 (cf. Jha's translation, p. 2—see note 9 below). Cf. Ganganatha Jha translations of "*lokāyata*" as "atheism," and "*āstika*" as "theistic." This is patently misleading, particularly in the case of the latter, for one could still be an *āstika* and not believe in God; otherwise the Mīmāṃsā would have to be classified as *nāstika,* which to my knowledge no one has ever done. In his later works, however, Jha is more cautious.

It may be noted that to be classified as a *nāstika* (heterodox) one would presumably deny one or more of the following: (i) belief in an afterlife; (ii) belief in the Veda; (iii) belief in God. But it does not follow from this that a simple assertion of (iii) in itself is sufficient to render one an *āstika,* as noted above; and if that were the case, the Brahmanical priests would not have looked down upon the new arrivals on their land, namely, the Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as *mlecchas* (literally, barbarians or infidels)! It may be argued that, as far as the Mīmāṃsā is concerned, in the *āstika*-making criteria, (iii) is not even necessary, while (i) is more or less contingent, and (ii) is both necessary and definitive.

scripture—this source would be necessarily personal, or *pauruṣeya*; or (b) by attributing the Veda to a beginningless and timeless body of "authorless words," with its own fixed or "originary" (*autpattika*) relation between the words and their meanings—this source would be deemed *apauruṣeya*, non-personal or, perhaps, "*trans-personal*." Kumārila chose to assert the latter because he regarded the *śruti* as beginningless and authorless. That is to say, the teaching of the Veda is without beginning, for in its present form the scripture stretches backwards through the uninterrupted succession of teachers and students to the very beginning when it was given along with the universe and subsequently "seen" or "heard" by the primordial "seers" (*ṛṣis*). The Veda as such is without an author, human or divine; moreover, were it authored it would of necessity be flawed by the author's imperfections, and its authority thus diminished. It validates itself insofar as it is the sole source of knowledge about matters that extend beyond the senses.[6]

Thus the Veda was there from the beginning of the manifest universe and remains independent of the will or authorship of a transcendent being or God. God who might be conceived of as the original source and author of the Veda is thereby unnecessary; or He is necessary only for revivifying the lapsed or lost "self-revealing" scripture. Hence, a "divine revelation" as ascribed, say, to the Judaeo-Christian scriptures is ruled out.

Accordingly, *atheism* seems to be a distinct possibility. Is this the Mīmāṃsā position? If so, how tenable is it within the *āstika* frame of reference, and is it consistent within the received Hindu tradition?[7] Is it coherent on other accounts? Our discussion will be confined to the first two questions.

III. THE CONTRARY POSITION

Ganganatha Jha is most forceful and consistent in his examination of the claim under dispute. He refers directly to Kumārila's texts:

> Kumārila's views with regard to God are found in the *Ślokavārttika, Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* chapter. He also denies the creation (*śloka* #47) and dissolution (#68) of the

[6]For further discussion on the Mīmāṃsā view of "authorless text" and its comparisons with Western theories of Revelation and language, see Puruṣottama Bilimoria, "On the Idea of Authorless Revelation (*Apauruṣeya*)," in Roy W. Perrett, ed., *Indian Philosophy of Religion* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 143–66. On Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya theories of language, Bilimoria, *Śabdapramāṇa: Word and Knowledge, A Doctrine in Nyāya-Mīmāṃsā Philosophy, Towards a Framework for Śruti-prāmāṇya* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel/Kluwer, 1988). See also, J. A. B. van Buitenen, "Introduction," *The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1983).

[7]The strongest assertion rejecting application of the epithet "atheism" to the Mīmāṃsā, on the grounds that this would disqualify the school from the *āstika* tradition, is to be found in Pasupathinath Shastri's *Introduction to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (Calcutta; A. N. Bhattacharya, 1923; 2nd edition: Chaukhamba Orientalia Varanasi, 1980), pp. 9–13, and *passim*. Shastri invokes as his authority the veteran Max Müller, who made a similar defense. Shastri's supposition, however, that *āstika* entails "belief in God" cannot be supported, since "belief in God" is not a sufficient condition for one to be an *āstika*, and, contrariwise, belief in the supremacy of the Veda does not entail belief in God. See note 5 above.

universe as a whole (#113); he bases his denial of the creator on the same grounds as that of the 'omniscient person' (#47–59, #114–116).[8]

Let us see how Kumārila develops this critique.

1. Kumārila Against the Cosmological Argument

First of all, Kumārila considers some circumstantial evidence that might support the view of the creation of the world. Some schools are of the opinion that the universe is subject to a periodic process of creation and dissolution attributed to the personal God, known in Vedic literature as Prajāpati. Kumārila, however, takes a rather skeptical stance on such claims. (Indeed his form of skepticism might remind one, but only just, of David Hume.) He sets up the following questions:

> At a time when all this (earth, water, etc.), did not exist, what could have been the condition of the universe? As for Prajāpati Himself, what could be His position? and what His form?
>
> And at that time (when no men existed) who would know Him and explain His character to the later created persons? (If it be held that He cannot be perceived by any man, then) without perception (or cognition of some sort, by some person), how can we determine this (fact of His existence)?
>
> Then again, in what manner do you believe the world to have had a beginning in time? (If it be held that it is brought about by a desire on the part of Prajāpati, then) since Prajāpati is (held to be) without a material body, etc., how could He have any desire towards creation?
>
> (Ślokavārttika, = SV, Sambandhākṣepaparihāra, = s; #45–47)[9]

Evidently, what worries Kumārila is that we cannot have any notion of what the world was like prior to the supposed creation and how it actually came about. For what could the beings who first appeared understand? What kind of cognition could they have had to record these events? Could they have understood from where and how they had suddenly come about, and what the state of things were prior to the creation? Could they even have understood that Prajāpati was the creator (SV s#58–59)? At best we can make inferences on the basis of and in analogy with what we know now; but it is questionable whether we can infer from

[8]Ganganatha Jha, Indian Thought Series, Benares Hindu University, Benares, 1904, vol. 11, p. 262, repeated in his *The Prābhakāra School of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), p. 88; similar discussions also occur in his *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā in its Sources*, p. 135ff.

[9]*Ślokavārttika* of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, with commentary *Nyāyaratnākara* of Pārthasārathi Miśra, Prachyabharati Series 10, ed. and rev. Swami Dvarikadasa Sastri (Varanasi: Tara Publications, 1978). SV = *Ślokavārttika*, I. xvi = "*Sambandhākṣepaparihāra*" = s, followed by "#" to indicate *śloka* or verse referred to. English texts are from Ganganatha Jha's translation of *Ślokavārttika* (I: *tarkapāda* section) with extracts from commentaries *Kaśikā* of Sucarita Miśra and *Nyāyaratnākara* of Pārthasārathi Miśra, Bibliothetica Indica 146 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1900–1908); reprinted Sri Garib Das Oriental Series No. 8 (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1983), p. 356. Reference to Jha's translation is indicated in parentheses, though his translation is not reliable in some instances. (I have cited his translation after cross-checking with the original and commentarial works.) The commentary referred to in the text and notes is Pārthasārathi Miśra's *Nyāyaratnākara*.

such "evidence" anything about the state of the whole universe in some remote past.

Kumārila reasons that in order to create a material and corporeal world, either there has to be some pre-existing substance from which the creation is possible, or Prajāpati has a material body which is not eternal and out of which he creates or "emanates" the world. (We are here reminded of the classical Western maxim: *ex nihilo nihil fit.*) In either case, one would have to explain Prajāpati's coming to obtain such a body, or else accept the prior existence of material substance or matter. In the latter case, we would have to explain the origin of matter, or postulate another creator or universal cause responsible for this, and yet another for this, *ad infinitum* (SV s#48–49, #73 and comm.). Alternatively, if Prajāpati has a body that is not created, then this too would have to be explained, for "His body too must have had a beginning, inasmuch as it is also a body, like ours (made up of constituent parts)" (SV s#77). Suppose that God's body is *causa sui*. That is, God is the ground of his own body, which is therefore essentially uncreated. Kumārila again would want to question the essentialism implied here in regard to corporeality. Besides, if God's body were uncreated, why can we not assume that of ourselves, since we also have corporeal bodies: "If His body is everlasting, ours must also be everlasting."[10] The commentator considers this consequence to be absurd.

More seriously, Kumārila expresses concern that even if we were to assume that the world had its origin in God's all-powerful desire or "will" to create the world, given that the world has a material (constituent) nature and has to be brought into being and manipulated somewhere in the process, this would require a more rigorous explanation than has been forthcoming. In other words, how can an eternal God be said to possess a non-eternal body, as would be the case if the world were formed or born from it? Would not a perfect God degrade Himself by working with or through a transient body? One might say in reply that God has full control over the world-body by virtue of His intelligence, will, etc., just as a potter does when he produces a pot. But this analogy of the potter using his intelligence to form or mold a pot does not hold, for the potter does not have full control over the constituents of the pot, namely, the clay, etc., let alone over his own body. Thus this analogy does not help explain "creation" as we are to understand it (SV s#74, 78). Further, if "control" by intelligence were all that was necessary, then we could say as well that the collective intelligence of all sentient beings through their action brings about creation. What then would be so splendid about God's intelligence and action in relation to what we are also in contact with, i.e., our own minds? In any case, the superintending function of a supra-natural intelligence is not established (SV s#74–76).

Kumārila is, in part, addressing the cosmological argument of the Nyāya rational theists. But Kumārila might have missed some of the subtleties of the reasoned arguments and causal assumptions which the Naiyāyikas (followers of the Nyāya) came up with. The Nyāya relies on inference (*anumāna*) believing that it is possible to have knowledge of things which can never be perceived or directly known, on the basis of our knowledge of the class of things already

[10]Commentary (*Nyāyaratnākara*) on SV s#47 (p. 356).

known or knowable through direct perception.[11] God is the extreme case of the unknown. A simple inference is formulated on the basis of an analogy of the agency involved in the creation of a piece of art, or a pot from clay; the appeal is to causality, since agency is one form of causality. In most general terms, every finite cause (i.e., every cause of which we have experience), whether formal, material, final, or efficient, entails an agency or an efficient cause to bring it about.[12] As in the production of a ceramic, the clay is shaped on a revolving wheel, and the kneading of the clay as well as the motion of the wheel is traced back to some person, viz., the potter. The argument is in respect to the *kāryatva* or being-an-effect, which is causally linked to an agent. (The possible infinite regress argument involved in this was not crucial to the Naiyāyikas, so we shall ignore that.) Uddyotakara (500–600 C.E.) developed some initial arguments hinted at in the early Nyāya treatise of Gautama (?200 C.E.). Uddyotakara's formulation runs something like this: the different things in nature (*physis*) such as grass, shoots, earth, etc., must have an agent just as manufactured things (*technē*) such as pots, cloth, etc. have an agent, which in the case of the pot is the potter. And the cause of the natural effects, such as grass, earth, etc., is God.

Centuries later, Gaṅgeśa (1300–1400 C.E.), the founder of the Navya-nyāya or "new logic" school, took up the simple inference (*kṣityādi sakārtṛkaṃ karyatvat ghaṭavat*), unpacked it into its (four) constitutents parts, considered and examined its possible reformulations, and wove an extremely sophisticated defense of the inference, answering all possible objections raised against the validity of the inferential process involved. He offered his own formulation based on a complex reasoning by parity and concluded in favor of the existence of God, the omniscient Being who knows and directs the beginningless flux of atoms, dyads, triads, and the "unseen effectuality" (*adṛṣṭa*), and who through his all-extensive desire creates the world.[13]

Basically, what the Nyāya position argues is that "being-an-effect," as in the case of pots, extends to the world as well; that "having-an-agent" likewise applies to both, since it clearly is the case with (the) pot; and to state otherwise would be contradictory.[14] But God, in this view, does not have to produce through his bodily activity or agency each and every particular thing, nor does God have to promulgate every effect that we see and experience in the world. It follows that God does not have to possess knowledge of the particulars or be the direct cause of their existence. God is the formal and universal efficient cause (invoking the rule that the cause of the universal is the universal), and there are other finite efficient and material causes that bring about the particular things and events as there are in the world. Thus God depends, in part, on human effort to create the world. In other words, God knows the motive and general principles involved in the production of things in the world, but He does not actually involve Himself in

[11]John Vattanky, *Gaṅgeśa's Philosophy of God* (Adyar: Adyar Research and Library Centre, 1985), p. xi.

[12]Strictly speaking this is Aristotle's four-fold division of causes; the Nyāya basically recognizes two: efficient and material causes, under which formal and final causes are respectively subsumed. Nor is there in the Nyāya ontology the distinction between necessary and contingent causal relations.

[13]Vattanky, p. 166, pp. 408ff.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 204, and also pp. 326ff.

the process: He has, as it were, a remote telic and instrumental control over the world.

God indeed works in mysterious ways. In the final analysis, however, the God of Nyāya, since He does not create the world *ex nihilo,* or out of His own body as a spider spins a web from its bowels, is reduced to something like the demiurge of Plato, who as architect forms the world out of a pre-existing set of conditions and substance (viz., by causing the atoms to come into mutual contact), maintains a continuous relationship with the universe as its preserver, and dissolves the world when conditions require it to be dissolved. This is as far as the cosmogonic necessity of God can be taken.

Again, the Mīmāṃsakas reply is unequivocal: if the basic substance of the world is not created by God, then how does God's desire move the insentient substance (atoms, etc.) to organize itself into creation (SV s#81–82)? Does He engage in some sort of activity? And how does God manage this without a body? What kind of "agency" is involved (SV s#82–83)? If God is the First Mover, who moves God? Could we still say that He is the "creator" God, even if He were known in form (SV s#58)? Presumably, we are speaking of something far beyond the scale of operation involved in the potter making his pot, the clockmaker his clock, or the spider spinning a web from within its body, or even the acorn generating the oak tree.[15] At this point, something like the Humean crunch comes in as Kumārila concludes: "There the theory of Creation and Dissolution must be admitted to resemble the every-day processes (of production and destruction); and any particular idea of these with regard to the production and destruction of the whole universe cannot be established, for want of proofs" (SV s#113). The reasoning here is that a mere logical possibility does not establish a necessity with any certainty.

We are here reminded of Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and the doubts that he expresses through Philo in taking "operations of one part of nature upon another for the foundation of our judgement concerning the origin of the whole (which never can be admitted)."[16] That is to say, the doubt is with regard to taking empirical instances, such as a clockmaker making a clock or the organic processes of plants and animals, as models for the principles governing the planets and the universe at large. We have not witnessed another universe being created, as we see clockmakers making clocks, potters creating pots, etc.; thus no parallels can be drawn here. And from limited conjunctions in our relative field of experience, we cannot go on to generalize about the process or origin of the order and structure of the universe as a whole. The analogies and reasoning the Nyāya has advanced, while they may be suggestive of a logical possibility, provide only weak justification, and in themselves, Kumārila argues, lack the force to convince one that such is necessarily the case, namely, that the universe as a whole has a cause.[17]

Further, from a finite world of experience we can infer only finite "origins"

[15]On "spider's web," see SV s#51 (pp. 356–57). Cf. Hume's ridicule of the Brahmin's spider-web cosmogony, and his guarded commendation for the novelty of the analogy! David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* in *Hume on Religion,* ed. and intro. by Richard Wollheim (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1963), p. 154.

[16]Hume, *Dialogues,* p. 121.

[17]*Ibid.,* pp. 120–25.

and contingent causal connections; the ramifications of this inference will, however, not be acceptable to the theist. This attitude of skepticism is based, in part, on the recognition of the limitations of human reason, in particular of inferential reasoning, and on grounds of evidence which tend to suggest otherwise (e.g., the forest on a marooned island had no conscious agent as its cause, unlike the tree in my suburban garden). Kumārila therefore pronounces: "It is not at all necessary for people who are conscious of their bodies, to have an idea of Creation and Dissolution, beyond (their own bodies), with regard to the whole universe."[18]

The major logical grounds for Hume's doubt about causality, for which he is most famous, were not articulated with the same philosophical rigor by the Mīmāṃsakas, who were nonetheless predisposed towards a healthy doubt about personal agency that extends beyond the immediately experienced world. To be sure, they "play safe" on the larger issue of causality, for too radical a criticism of causality would undermine the Mīmāṃsā's own commitment to a more abstract principle of causality—indeed, impersonal agency—as is implied in their doctrine of *apūrva* or "unseen potency," and certainly in the law of *karma* (where Hume and all Indian skeptics, including the Buddhists, part company). The Mīmāṃsakas chide the Nyāya for its admission of the *adṛṣṭa,* the "unseen effectuality," which is said to be the repository of *dharma* and *adharma* (merits and demerits), and which is also effective in the delivery of "goods" of the world, and of liberation. What need is there, then, for a superior sentient agent? The earlier Vaiśeṣika ("atomist" school, whose developed ontology is largely adopted by the Nyāya) was content to explain the unity and functioning of the world on the basis of the interaction or fusion-effect of the uncreated atoms (substance) and souls (desire) and the principle of *adṛṣṭa* (efficiency), thereby ruling out the necessity of God. *Dharma,* by the same token, circumscribes the impersonal moral component of the universe.

2. The Moral Argument

There is, however, apart from the appeal to causality, another reason that some Naiyāyikas found persuasive for inferring the guiding hand of God. This amounts to a moral argument, namely, the necessity to account for the dispensation of the fruits of actions, which result from people's previous merits and demerits. Unless there were an all-knowing divine and intelligent agent, how could we conceive this to be possible? Surely, as we have just remarked, the Nyāya believes that actions create the unseen effectuality (*adṛṣṭa*), much like the *apūrva* of the Mīmāṃsā, but that in itself this is an inert property which continues into the life hereafter. Uddyotakara therefore reasons: "The same argument holds good here also: the merit and demerit of the dead people need to be activated by an intelligent agent. Only being activated by an intelligent agent, do the elements (earth, fire, water) up to air operate in their respective functions, like holding and so on."[19] In other words, there has to be a superintendent being such as God who arranges a person's rebirth and dispenses the appropriate results in the new-born body.

[18]SV s#112 (p. 368). See also Hume on re-examination of the principle "Like Effects prove like causes," Part V, *Dialogues,* p. 138.
[19]Vattanky, p. 25.

The Mīmāṃsakas bring two objections against this argument, while agreeing with the Nyāya that in the absence of actions of human beings there would be no *adṛṣṭa,* and hence no result or fruits. First, why would God, who is supposed to be impartial to all creatures, act in such a way as to bring about disproportionate fruits? Why would a kind and loving God allow such an iniquitous situation? If *dharma* (as merits and demerits) were absolutely under His control, why should there be pain (in the world) (SV s#82–83)? If on the one hand the activity of the world were to be dependent upon (i.e., regulated by) these (*dharma,* etc.), then this would entail accepting something else (i.e., an agency other than God's desire). But this would also deprive God of His independence. If on the other hand we accept God's will or desire, this would undermine the law of *karma*; that notwithstanding, God's will still must have a cause (if it is to activate *dharma-adharma*). In that case, the *adṛṣṭa* might as well be accepted as the cause (of everything) (SV s#72–73). Again, as Hume would later put it, since there is so much pain and suffering, we have to assume either two world-powers, one working for good and the other for evil, or else a single morally neutral creator.[20]

Second, asks Kumārila, is it so very inconceivable that people's own actions could directly bring about the results? Is not the law of *karma* a sufficient postulate to explain the process of dispensation? And if the law of *karma* is inexorable, then what is the place and necessity of God? Or, alternatively, if God is so powerful, can He not annul that law (SV s#53, comm.)? Moreover, if there were some end absolutely essential to be achieved, could not God achieve this without needing to create the world, a world in which He is then said to destroy (SV s#54, 57)?

Some Naiyāyikas respond by suggesting that God merely creates the auxiliary causes by which individual dispensations take place, so that God does not have to attend to and deal with each and every individual action or the unseen. Or, as Newton might have said, God does not move His "hidden hand" or directly intervene each time an apple falls; the law of gravity, which God built into the universe, takes care of that. Presumably, the Naiyāyikas might concede that there is an autonomous and inexorable operation of the law of *karma*; they are, however, also quick to point out that God is both above merits and demerits (*dharma-adharma*) and that the law of *karma* is subordinate to God. That is to say, it is only when God activates the merits and demerits of the individual souls that the just reward to each soul is meted out.

The standard Mīmāṃsā rebuttal of the last position is that if a soul cannot direct its own merit and demerit, neither can God, who is simply another soul (in the Nyāya view), do it. Kumārila also doubts that God can "perceive" merits and demerits and that He has any contact with bodies in which these are located. Kumārila rules that it is unparsimonious to postulate an agency beyond the "unseen" to account for the dispensation of rewards, etc. Furthermore, it is possible to explain that the world itself comes about as a result of the meritorious and the unmeritorious deeds of the eternally existing individual souls. Actions of people produce *apūrva,* and it is this unseen potency that is effective in bringing about things through which the fruits are enjoyed, etc. This aspect of the cosmogony is not developed by Kumārila, although this appears to be the

[20]Hume, *Dialogues,* pp. 178ff.

accepted account of the Mīmāṃsā's doctrine of "continuous creationism" (namely, that the proposed theory must be consistent with the everyday processes of becoming and disappearing; cf. #113, cited earlier). Kumārila reinforces this by remarking that "we could only admit of a gradual process of creation, such as we see in the case of present living beings (creating the jar, etc.)."[21]

3. The Problem of "Evil"

To diminish the Nyāya moral argument for God's role in the creation of the universe, Kumārila once again invokes the perennial "problem of evil" and takes it a step further in order to discredit the existence of the supposed (benevolent) Creator. To Kumārila the Nyāya account appears incoherent in light of the problem it creates in regard to the qualities attributed to God. He thus asks:

> Then, again, in the first place, how is it that He should have a desire to create a world which is to be fraught with all sorts of troubles to living beings? For at the time (of the beginning of creation) He has not got any guiding agencies, in the shape of virtue (or sin) etc., of the living beings themselves.[22]

If one were to insist that God created the world, then God would have to bear the blame for the "evil" that exists in the world. Would any conception of God as the all-loving and omnipotent being countenance such a fundamental discrepancy? This indeed is not an uncommon argument used for denying—or at least for casting serious doubt upon—the existence of the Creator-being in other, non-Indian, skeptical and philosophical traditions, as we have already noted in the work of Hume. The disconcerting problem in the Mīmāṃsā or the broadly Indian discourse was not so much with (what elsewhere has been termed) "evil," as with the overwhelming fact of pain and a life of disproportionate adversities or suffering (*duḥkha*), and the cyclical recurrence of death after death (*saṃsāra*). The Buddhists had added further weight to this perception and developed it with much greater analytical rigor.

Kumārila next considers the suggestion that God or Prajāpati might have created the world out of pity. He is puzzled by this suggestion, and wonders for whom would God have had pity or compassion in the absence of beings (prior to creation) (SV s#52)?

Now if God were so moved by sheer compassion (for whomever), why did He not create either just happy beings or an everlasting happy world? Was it so beyond His will not to create a world of miserably painful creatures?[23] It did not, however, occur to the Mīmāṃsaka that God could have created a world in which pain and pleasure, good and bad (or "evil") are finely poised in an equilibrium which human striving attempts ultimately to transcend and be liberated from. Indeed, the Nyāya, and to an extent the Vedānta, seem to have espoused such a position; not so the Mīmāṃsā. And, of course, the cause of suffering may well be attributed to the sheer folly of humans who fail to recognize or adhere to God's moral plan. Besides, suffering could have its roots in the illusion-making power

[21] SV s#67 (p. 359).
[22] SV s#49–50 (p. 356).
[23] SV s#52–54 (p. 357).

(*māyā*) people have been loathe to shun. God, all things being equal, has the best of intentions—or maybe in His infinite wisdom He remains indifferent to human suffering, for He has made the best of all possible worlds.

Perhaps, ponders Kumārila, God created the world merely for His own amusement or "play" (*līlā*), as the Vedāntins say and as it is often narrated in folklore and mythology. To Kumārila's way of thinking, however, such a God would then only be an incredibly selfish being, calling down upon Himself a good deal of trouble and questioning.[24]

This, then, would not only contradict the theory that God is perfectly happy, but would involve Him in much wearisome toil. Kumārila does not believe it conceivable that there could be a supremely compassionate God who would create a world full of pain and adversity merely for "sport." But if amusement were God's intention, then, again, Kumārila cannot see how God could be said to be self-fulfilled and infinitely contented.[25] One supposes that here Kumārila is questioning the claim to perfection in God, who nonetheless must resort to an imperfect creation to find lasting fulfillment. Kumārila wonders why any theory would want to ground itself, and its God, in such contradictory positions. If any artist's creation were to be marred by imperfections, how would he or she claim to be perfect!

Against those who claim that God creates and then after many millennia of normalcy (*yugas*) destroys or brings about a dissolution of the world—a culminating process known in Hindu cosmogony as *pralaya*—the Mīmāṃsaka unleashes the scurrilous charge that this entails an awful suicidal tendency on the part of such a God (SV s#68 and comm.). It is beyond Mīmāṃsā logic why the good God would wish such a universal dissolution, any more than the leader of a kingdom would condemn his entire citizenry to the gallows in order to rid the kingdom of thugs and robbers.

Perhaps what this shows is the Mīmāṃsā's reluctance to take seriously analogical thinking, whatever its limitations, and to consider how we might begin to understand that which extends beyond ordinary human experience. The Mīmāṃsaka was undoubtedly a stickler for not going beyond the immediately given, and in some ways was more positivist than the modern-day positivists. The irony, though, is that the Mīmāṃsā had no qualms about accepting the idea of *apūrva* or the "unseen potency," attributed as it is to human action, and which seems to work with the same degree of automation as does the complex system of switches and signals used for controlling the operation of space shuttles. The reality of *svarga,* the heaven-like "kingdom of ends," is another of Mīmāṃsā's commitments, as also is the belief in the eternity and plurality of individual souls. Surely, on such matters, the Mīmāṃsā displays a distinct non-naturalistic tendency and appears to rest its faith on what goes beyond the perceptible. In themselves, however, these "imperceptibles" are not the class of "trancendentals" as any standard theistic system would wish to suppose. The "world beyond," or the "other-worldly" reality, is not something removed from the bounds of human reality. Even the gods or deities who are invoked in ritual sacrifices as "wit-

[24]SV s#56 and commentary (p. 357).
[25]*Ibid.*

nesses" to human offerings do not fulfill the function that God fulfills in, for instance, the Nyāya view.

4. Evidence in the Veda

Could scripture be the grounds for establishing the existence of God the Creator? Some, especially the Naiyāyikas and the Vedāntins like Rāmānuja (*Śrībhāṣya on BS* I i 3), argue that the assertion about God's creation is to be read in the Veda itself. The scripture further speaks in one voice of the creation of the world and the Veda. Indeed, *Ṛg Veda* X.90.9 appears to speak of the Veda as having originated from the Primordial "Man" (*Puruṣa*) in a cosmic sacrifice orchestrated by the gods. The *Upaniṣads,* notably the *Muṇḍaka* (II.1.4), speak of the Veda as having emanated from Brahman. Again, the *Brāhamaṇas* attribute the emergence of the Veda to the gods, namely, *Agni* (Fire), *Vāyu* (Wind), *Āditya* (Sun). Elsewhere, Brahman is described as having "breathed forth" (*niḥśvasita*) the Veda (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II.4.10, IV.5.11). Most impressively, the *Īśa* (I.i) and *Śvetāśvatara* (VI.18) *Upaniṣads* speak of the pervasiveness of the Supreme Lord, who gave the Veda to Brahmā (himself looked upon as the "Creator" aspect of God).

The Mīmāṃsaka, again, dismisses such claims with more than a touch of cynicism, for he considers the passages to be unreliable. Rather, these are to be interpreted metaphorically because they fall under the category of *arthavādas* or auxiliary statements, whose explicit purport is to eulogize and praise the central theme of the primary ritual text (*vidhis*). But there is another reason why they might be thought to be unreliable—as we shall mention shortly. But it seems odd that a Mīmāṃsaka would declare the Veda to be unreliable. If the Veda is untrustworthy, one might then ask, how could the Mīmāṃsā sustain the claim that the Veda is infallible? The following response, which by any standard would seem to be pretentious, is made: ". . . because even though He may not have created the world, He might *speak* of having done so, in order to show off His great power."[26]

Commenting on this disavowal, Pārthasārathi Miśra is quick to point out that it is not at all the intention of his master to admit to the existence of God; rather, such an assertion about God and so on is to be expected in a (sacred) narrative. Thus the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas,* the literature from the *smṛti* tradition, fondly speak of creation emanating from Prajāpati. But such "story-telling," argues Kumārila, is to be construed as being secondary to the primary intentionality of the text, whose basic aim is to coax the individual towards proper action, rightful duty, and a morally compelling "form of life."[27]

In such a minimalist reading of the text one need not assume the intentionality of an "intelligent being": the text speaks for itself, it has no precursor other than another text; and it contains within its linguistic structure the potentiality (*śabdaśakti*) for its own hermeneutics. Where the text appears to make reference to an author, it does so by way of narrative device, which, however, is not central to its primary thesis pertaining largely to injunctions about duty. Thus, since none of these references to creation is contingent upon the agency of an external

[26]SV s#60 (p. 358).
[27]*Ibid.*

intelligence, or a "first stirrer," there is little need to accept the creator God. Consider also that, on the one hand, had the scripture come after creation, then it could not have recorded any impressions at the moment of creation, and hence such knowledge would have to be secondhand. If, on the other hand, the scripture preceded creation, then its utterances on creation would be *a priori* (SV s#61–62). What if the scripture was created with the universe? Kumārila might reply that this is an instance of yet another myth-making story intended to distract the believers and detractors alike.

God, then, on the accounts considered above, does not appear to the Mīmāṃsā to be a very useful postulate for explaining the creation of the world and the workings of the destiny of each human being. People's action through the instrumentality of the *apūrva* is responsible for the coming-into-being of the world, and so there is no need to suppose that this process has to be controlled and regulated by any supernatural (personal) agency. Rather, the laws of action-retribution, of sacrifice-result, of duty-reward etc., operate, as it were, automatically, autonomously, and inexorably, as do the so-called laws of nature identified in the sciences; and they do not stand in need of a regulative intelligent principle as implied in any postulation about a creator God.

5. The Argument from Scripture

Another variation of the argument from scripture which Kumārila examines is the Nyāya attempt to argue for the existence of God on the grounds of the authority and sanctity of the Veda in respect to its pronouncements on *Dharma* ("Law"), which Nyāya readily accepts as an independent moral concept. The Nyāya rationalists championed the following argument: the remarkable authoritative and trustworthy characteristics of the Veda, as well as its internal structure, suggest a transcendental source of superior eminence, who alone is capable of such insights and ethical rectitude in His concern for sound human action and welfare. It is inconceivable, contended these rationalists (and as Udayana, c. 900–1200 C.E., later formalized[28]), that any being other than one who is omniscient and most benevolent would have been moved to "reveal" to an ignorant human race such elevating and pristine truths as are embodied in the Veda.

In other words, the impeccability and infallibility of the scripture inevitably point to a source or an author that cannot but be omniscient. Thus, God is to be accepted on account of the inviolability of the word of scripture (and not the other way around, namely, that "revelation" is accepted because it is the word of God). Common sense resists the suggestion that any art (or "text") is ever without an artist (or "creator") who, moreover, has attributes which are rather special to him or her.

At best, this argument of the Nyāya (with the familiar Thomist ring to it) unwittingly introduces the suggestion that the Veda must have been authored. The Mīmāṃsā is not prepared seriously to entertain this view, not because of what it does or does not establish in respect to God, but because of what it

[28]See summary of Udayana's argument in George Chemparathy, *Indian Rational Theology* (Vienna: de Nobili Research Library series, 1979); and see section on the Nyāya argument in "Hindu theodicy: Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja on Brahman," in *Religious Investigations*, Study Guide and Reader, Philosophy of Religion (Geelong, Vic.: Deakin Univ., 1987).

attempts to establish in respect to the origin of the Veda. Kumārila finds the Nyāya line of reasoning to be utterly unpersuasive and highly speculative. There is no good reason to suppose that the virtues and sanctity of the scripture point to any source beyond itself. As Śaṅkara was to do more forcefully after him (*BSB* II ii 38),[29] Kumārila points out a circularity in the Nyāya argument, namely, that first the omniscience of God is demonstrated on the basis of the authoritative character of the scripture, and then the authority of the scripture is established or confirmed on the grounds of the omniscience of God. What evidence is there, Kumārila asks, for the actual authorship of the scripture in question? Such an author has never been observed, and if the scripture mentions an author or authors, the reference is either to mythical beings or to names of persons, such as Kaṭhaka, who were entrusted with reciting particular portions of the Veda.[30] He rejects the Nyāya "proof" on the same grounds on which he rejects all forms of the "Veda by design" argument: for the Veda was not fashioned or issued by any being.

Might not, however, the acceptance of a supreme being as author of the scripture serve to vindicate the infallibility of the Veda? Kumārila's response to this question is an emphatic "No!" For, given that the Veda is already regarded as infallible, Kumārila thinks it fruitless to attempt to locate its origin in an infallible being. Or, to do so would undermine the infallibility of the Veda.[31] Furthermore, if the Veda is to be regarded as a creation of God, it might be difficult to accept all that is said there about God, for the simple reason that we cannot accept just anything anyone says about himself or herself, in scriptures or elsewhere (see earlier #60). But to counter this response one must first demand proof that the Veda is unauthoritative and fallible, lest the opinions therein be dismissed as false and unreliable. But for the Nyāya, this position can be successfully opposed by proving the existence of an infallible author of the Veda. In defense of his master, however, Pārthasārathi Miśra musters this quixotic reply:

> But then, this infallible author too would depend upon the Veda for proof of his existence; and the infallibility of the Veda resting upon the infallibility of such an author, the reasoning would become a case of arguing in a circle.[32]

It is indeed curious that a divine author would need to rely on the Veda for proof of His own existence. But this puzzle is not pointless, for according to legend Brahmā, the demiurge-architect of the world, is said to have wandered, the Veda clasped in one hand, from one corner of the universe to another, looking for his own origin, before he disappeared down a lotus stem into Viṣṇu's navel. The upshot of all this is that a theorist would not consider postulating an author had he not accepted the possibility of an independent scripture. But if there is no good reason to doubt the authenticity of the scripture, then an author (as source of its authority) need not be assumed.

[29]*BSB* = *Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara*, ed. J. L. Shastri, with *Ratnāprabhā, Bhāmatī and Nyāyanirṇaya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980).

[30]See *Ślokavārttika* section on *Apauruṣeya* ("authorless text") I (*tarkapāda*) xxvii–xxxii, pp. 553ff.

[31]SV #61 and commentary (p. 358). The second part of the argument is drawn from *Ślokavārttika*'s *Codana-sūtra* I.ii.69–70 and commentary (p. 31); see also #92–93, 98–101 under same *sūtra* (pp. 34–35).

[32]Commentary under SV *Codana-sūtra* #69 (Jha translation, p. 31).

It is clear also that Kumārila wants to place the onus of proof on the opponent. Furthermore, Kumārila wonders how the omniscience of such a superior being could be known or recognized unless there were other omniscient beings. But theists like the Naiyāyikas want to argue for only one omniscient being. The Mīmāṃsaka is pressed to say, it may be surmised, that even if there were an "omniscient" being or person who knows of His own existence, He would nonetheless know what is in the Veda—viz., the categorical imperatives of *Dharma* or sacrificial "duty" as means to the promotion of a more fruitful and liberated existence, here and hereafter. Hence His existence would be made redundant by dint of the fact that the knowledge He would possess is already contained in the Veda. In the final analysis, since all that is required is the realization of the truth of the assertion that "*Dharma* is knowable by the Veda alone," the Mīmāṃsā is not obliged to prove or accept the omniscience of any being, human or divine.[33]

6. Kumārila's Worries about Omniscience

From Kumārila's point of view, an omniscient being would at best be a metonym (for the Veda) and would at worst not be very kind (in view of the magnitude of suffering in the world), and is therefore not a desirable postulate.

The crucial point of the Mīmāṃsā argument is centered in this discussion of authorship and especially of "omniscience," which we should here emphasize a little more. After rejecting the Nyāya evidence, whose basis is an inference positing a God over and above the Veda, Kumārila next rejects any suggestion whatsoever of a being who is omniscient, on the grounds that ordinary humans, not themselves omniscient, would have no way of determining the omniscience of any being. Kumārila's motives, however, go much deeper than simply expressing difficulty of an epistemological kind. Clearly, his dispute is with the Nyāya method: the logician typically first establishes the existence of God by means of inference (from ordinary experience) and then attributes the composition of the Veda to God. This is clearly not acceptable, either from the logical or the *āstika* point of view.

In the crucial *ślokas* (SV s#114–116), Kumārila questions whether he would accept the evidence of the existence of the Creator God on the very assumption on which one is expected to accept the omniscience of a (human) being (*sarvajñanatvam*): *sarvajñavanniṣedhya ca straṣṭuḥ sadbhāvakalpanā?* (SV s#114). The Nyāya arguments seem to force one to do so. But there is great danger in this move, which Kumārila is at pains to arrest. The real or implied intent of this nagging doubt is brought out rather more clearly in Pārthasārathi's elaboration on Kumārila's foregoing cryptic statement: *yathā ca buddhadeḥ sarvajñatvaṃ puruṣatvādasmadādivan niṣedhyam, evaṃ prajāpaterapi straṣṭratvam* (*Nyāyaratnākara* s#114):

[33]SV s#114–116 (Jha translation, p. 368).

> As the omniscience of the Buddha cannot be proved from such statements as 'He (the Buddha) is omniscient' because he was a man like ourselves, so is the creatorship of Prajapati (in doubt).[34]

The disquiet is not merely with the claim in regard to creation, but with any arguments that purport to establish the omniscience, and thereby the creatorship, of a personal being, *such as of the Buddha*. Suppose for now that Buddha wrote the scripture in which he describes himself as an omniscient person (*sarvajña*); should one naively trust this statement? Suppose also that someone else after the Buddha wrote this into the text; should one rely on this statement without being critical of its authority? In the same way, then, even if we supposed the Veda was created by God and God therein speaks of His omniscience, we should not rely on this statement (about His omniscience, etc.).

The fundamental criticism is here embedded in the simile "*sarvajñavat*: like the omniscience." The omniscience alluded to, however, is precisely the omniscience of the Buddha claimed by his followers. The worry is that, given the very flimsy grounds on which the Nyāya is prepared to accept the omniscience of the supposed author of the scripture, what is there to prevent the Buddha from claiming to be omniscient, the creator of the world and the authority above all authority, particularly that of the Veda? The Veda, then, would shrink in its significance, and Hinduism would suffer a further assault. If, on the other hand, it could be shown that the authority of the Veda logically precedes Prajāpati (the God of creation), then it would follow that Prajāpati knows what is already contained in the Veda, for no knowledge (about *Dharma*, right actions, etc.) is possible without the Veda (SV s#115). Kumārila concludes, therefore, that we must accept that the Veda was prior to creation or to the existence of any sentient being. If the Nyāya refuses to accept this thesis, what hope is there that the Buddhists will accept it and refrain from thinking that another omniscient being, such as the Buddha himself, has knowledge superior to that of the Veda? (We may speculate whether a Veda-believing omniscient Buddha would have caused less of a problem for the Mīmāṃsā. They would, however, still question the need for two infallible authorities—viz., the Veda and the Buddha.)

IV. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion it appears that much of Kumārila's critique and attempted deconstruction of the then prevailing arguments for the existence and absolute nature of God could be attributed to his need to respond to the Buddhist onslaught against the Brahmanical faith in the authority of the Veda. Although it is said that the Buddha remained mute on the question of the existence of God and His role in religious discourse, the avowed non-theism of his followers was an issue of some concern to many a Hindu. But it was the attack on the Veda that was by far the more sensitive issue for the orthodox Brahmanical schools. Hence,

[34]*Nyāyaratnākara* on SV s#114. It is to be noted that Jha's translation of this is unreliable, for he avoids mention of the Buddha which actually occurs in the commentary. Kumārila in SV *Codanasūtra* #95–96 (p. 35) mentions the Buddha by name and remarks that the Buddha's assertion, as with all human assertion, is not immune from defects and imperfections, suggesting that the Buddha is not to be regarded as being omniscient (SV s#119). See also SV *Codanasūtra* #47–59, #114–117, and #128–138; #169–172; #145–147.

leading the rebuttal, the Mīmāṃsakas concentrated their efforts on addressing the latter issue. Further, the Nyāya attempt to establish the existence of God on the basis of inferential reasoning, and by accepting the scripture as the creation of an omniscient author, simply opened up a Pandora's box that might allow recognition of the sanctity of any authorial text or scripture, as well as evoke similar claims to omniscience on behalf of the Buddha and other fundamental founders of religions. For the Mīmāṃsā, all of these would appear to be highly detrimental to Hindu orthodoxy.

Now it is possible that Kumārila had come to disbelief in God, or that this had been reinforced while (as it is sometimes claimed[35]) he was with the Buddhists, or that he was a Buddhist himself. But he could not reconcile himself to this disbelief or seeming act of apostasy, even while he campaigned to raise the status of the Veda. Clearly, neither would he accept the omniscience of any human teacher or author (*auctor*). He had found in the Veda a pre-established, albeit impersonal, authority; hence there was no need for him to accept any personal "author/ity" (*auctoritas*) whether human or divine. The thrust of the argument in the passages we have considered thus appears to be tinged with these conflicts, which Kumārila may well have attempted to resolve in himself. Why else would he consider so seriously the Nyāya locution about "omniscience," particularly human omniscience, which he then tries to refute? Certainly, he had to counter the Nyāya claims in respect to omniscience of the Creator God. But Kumārila did not stop at that: for omniscience is *omniscience,* whether its locus is human or divine.

In conclusion, then, several inter-connected motives appear to have been at the core of the Mīmāṃsā skepticism about assertions for the existence of God:

1) Arguments based on inference (*anumāna*) would tend to elevate the capacity of reason beyond its reach: for the impressions that we have through sense-data do not suggest any such necessary inferential links (*vyāpti*); if anything, creation-dissolution seems to be a continuous process. (This is a kind of Humean skepticism.)

2) A transcendental deduction with respect to *dharma-adharma* would point to the reality of *apūrva* (unseen efficient potency), thereby ruling out the necessity of a supreme apportioner or superintender of human actions; besides, this explains better the ubiquitous problem of "evil" and suffering. (This is moral-*theodikē* skepticism.)

3) To admit creatorship on the assumption of omniscience opens the way for more than one omniscient being and especially for the Buddha's claim to omniscience, and perhaps even his creatorship; or it tolls the end to belief in the world

[35]See Kaviraj, note 3 above, p. ix; and Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch* (3 vols.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1921–1922), vol. 2, p. 110, p. 207 (reprinted New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1962). Kaviraj reports a tradition recorded in Tibetan works according to which Kumārila lost a debate to Dharmakīrti and thereupon became a Buddhist. Other accounts suggest that Kumārila lost faith in Buddhism as well, defied his teacher, and suffered loss of "one eye" during a wager with Buddhists as he attempted to re-assert his belief in the Veda. In order to expiate his heretical "sins" and to reverse his theomacy, Kumārila is believed to have attempted to immolate himself. Since, however, he had a lot of *apūrva* (presumably meritorious ones also) stored up, his body smoldered without incinerating; thus he stayed conscious of his state for an immensely long time. Legend has it that no one, not even Śaṅkara who arrived half-to-a-century later, could talk the despondent scholar-grown-skeptic out of his miserable self-annihilation (a bit like the suicidal tendencies of some latter-day existentialists).

altogether, more particularly, belief in everlasting souls, "kingdom of ends" (*svarga*), and the efficacy of rituals; likewise, the end to reliance on evidence of scripture on such matters. Here personal omniscience is rejected. (This is *onto-logos* skepticism.)

4) A supreme personal being independent of the Veda undermines the finality and absoluteness of the Veda, whose authorlessness is in need of urgent defense which would also vindicate the autonomy of the moral law (*Dharma*). (This is authorial skepticism.)

5) Since the Buddhists did not evolve any such doctrine of *apauruṣeyatva* or "authorless revelation" as had the Mīmāṃsā,[36] that in itself is sufficient for preserving the orthodox-heterodox (*āstika-nāstika*) distinction, and, therefore, for upholding the orthodoxy of Mīmāṃsā, if not of Hinduism at large. (The erstwhile orthodox-heterodox *différance* shifts to "authorlessness" for its authenticating mark.)

This does not prove conclusively that the Mīmāṃsaka, although by any standards a *doubter* and possibly also an apostate, is an *atheist*, or really that he is a *theist*. But it does show that this apologeticist from the most orthodox and presumably dogmatic of Hindu schools is an *agnostic*. It is, then, not such a heresy or blasphemy, at least within one of the world's major *theo-philosophia* traditions, to call into doubt the reality of the Transcendent and to be open to theomachy.

Finally, from Hume, an anecdote that Kumārila might have taken a curious delight in (and added his own nuance as to the form of "religion" one returns to):

> Don't you remember, said PHILO, the excellent saying of LORD BACON on this head [whether atheist and sceptic are synonymous]? That a little philosophy, replied CLEANTHES, makes a man an Atheist: a great deal converts him to religion.[37]

[36]See note 6 above.
[37]*Dialogues*, p. 111.

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RICHARD P. HAYES

PRINCIPLED ATHEISM IN THE BUDDHIST SCHOLASTIC TRADITION

0. INTRODUCTION

In their systematic presentations of religious philosophy, the Indian Buddhists consistently defended the position that belief in an eternal creator god who superintends his creation and looks after the concerns of his creatures is a distraction from the central task of the religious life. This was clearly the position taken in the early Pāli literature and in the Theravāda philosophy based on that literature, but even in the later Mahāyāna writings such as the Lotus Sūtra and the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, in which buddhahood is portrayed not as a feature of the isolated career of Siddhārtha Gautama but rather as a constant feature of the entire cosmos at all times, great care is taken to try to distinguish the concept of the cosmic Buddha-nature in the forms of Dharmakāya or Tathāgatagarbha from the concept of a creator god. The Buddhists were, for whatever reasons, eager to avoid falling into a theistic position. The motivation behind the present paper has been to discover what those reasons were.

Section 1 will outline how the issue of God's existence is treated in the early Buddhist literature, especially in the Suttapiṭaka, where systematic Buddhist philosophy begins. Section 2 will review the treatment of the question of divine creation as an issue in the systematic philosophy of such thinkers as Vasubandhu (400—480), Dharmakīrti (600—660), Śāntarakṣita (725—788) and Kamalaśīla (740—795). And section 3 will show how the arguments for atheism are isomorphic with the arguments for a variety of other positions to which the Buddhist philosophers were committed.

1.0. BUDDHIST ĀGAMAS ON THE QUESTION OF GOD

In the Nikāya literature, the question of the existence of God is treated primarily from either an epistemological point of view or a

moral point of view. As a problem of epistemology, the question of God's existence amounts to a discussion of whether or not a religious seeker can be certain that there is a greatest good and that therefore his efforts to realize a greatest good will not be a pointless struggle towards an unrealistic goal. And as a problem in morality, the question amounts to a discussion of whether man himself is ultimately responsible for all the displeasure that he feels or whether there exists a superior being who inflicts displeasure upon man whether he deserves it or not.

An instance of the epistemological treatment of the question of the highest good occurs in the Tevijja Sutta, the thirteenth sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya. In this sutta there is an account of a dispute between two young brahmins, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, over the issue of which religious practices lead most directly to union with Brahmā. Brahmā is typically treated in the Nikāya literature as an object of brahmanical devotion who is believed by his devotees to be the master over whom no other being has mastery (abhibhū anabhibhūto), who sees everything (aññad-atthu-daso), the mighty one (vasavattī), who is lord, maker, designer, chief, creator, master and father of all beings that have been and of all beings that shall be (issaro kattā nimāttā seṭṭho sañjitā vasī pitā bhūtabhavyānam).[1] Moreover, companionship with Brahmā (Brahma-sahavyatā) is believed to be the state of salvation, and so whatever set of practices leads most directly to companionship with Brahmā may be considered the most direct path to salvation (añjasâyano niyyāniko).[2] But the brahmin students Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja have heard from their respective teachers differing accounts on which practices lead to the goal that they both desire. And so they decide to approach Gotama the Buddha to see whether he can decide which party is right in this very important dispute.

On being told the nature of the dispute between Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, Gotama Buddha begins by asking the disputants a few questions of his own, and the answers to the questions show that the young brahmins believe that there are many alternative paths that lead to Brahmā, but the dispute is really over which path is most direct. On learning this much, Gotama Buddha then pursues the supposition that there are paths that lead men to meet Brahmā face to face. What, asks the Buddha, entitles us to believe that anyone meets Brahmā face to

face? Prompted by Gotama's questions, the young brahmins concede that no living brahmin teacher claims ever to have seen Brahmā face to face, nor has any living brahmin teacher's teacher, nor has any teacher in the lineage of teachers for the past seven generations. Moreover, not even the Ṛṣis, the ancient seers who made the Vedas available to man and whose words the brahmin priests learn and chant and transmit down through the generations, claim to have seen Brahmā face to face. What we have then, is the astonishing state of affairs in which the followers of the brahmanical religious tradition are striving towards a goal for the existence of which no one has any evidence. Their religious goal, says the Buddha, is laughable (hassaka), vain (rittaka) and empty (tucchaka).[3]

It is not only fellowship with God that is dismissed in this way. Very nearly the same treatment is given to a Jaina disciple and his teacher in the Cūḷa-Sakuladāyi-sutta and the Vekhanassa-sutta respectively, suttas seventy-nine and eighty in the Majjhima Nikāya. Here the Jainas are depicted as seeking after a "highest lustre," a lustre superior to which and more excellent than which there is nothing. On hearing of this unsurpassed lustre, the Buddha's response is exactly the same as his reaction to the idea of comradeship with the mighty lord and creator of all beings: he challenges the devotees to point to that to which they are devoted. When they cannot do so, Gotama spins out an analogy to illustrate to the devotees the nature of their search. They are, he says, like a young man who goes about saying "I love and cherish the loveliest woman in the land," but who cannot say whether she is of high birth or low, of pale complexion or dark, a city-dweller or a villager, and does not even know what her name is. In short, the poor fool does not know, directly or indirectly, the identity of the woman with whom he claims to be in love. We are entitled to wonder, then, whether he is really in love at all.

The Buddha's reaction to those who seek to meet the creator or who seek the unsurpassed lustre is not to deny that such things exist. Rather, it is to take the epistemologically cautious stand that even though the loveliest woman in the world may exist, one might very well see the person who uniquely answers to the description of the world's loveliest woman and yet not realize *that* she is the person who answers to that description. Furthermore, it is not clear how one could

ever be certain that a given woman were the loveliest in the world, unless he could see every woman in the world and know that he had seen every woman. Similarly, it is not clear how a religious seeker could be sure that he had correctly identified the greatest lustre or the master over whom no other being has mastery. And, as we see in the Brahmajāla Sutta in the Dīgha Nikāya, the case can be made that people often misinterpret religious experiences and draw false conclusions from them, which should make one suspicious of even the very claims of direct experience of such things as unsurpassed masters. Until his identification of the supreme being is specific and certain, the religious seeker may be said to be pursuing such an ill-defined and nebulous goal that it becomes difficult to determine whether a given set of practices leads toward or away from the desired goal. In contrast, the goal of nirvāṇa towards which Gotama's disciples strive is sufficiently definite — the elimination of selfish desire and hostility — that a disciple can have a very clear idea of whether he has or has not reached it and whether he is or is not making progress toward it. It is a goal to be realized in this life, not in some future existence, says Gotama, and he makes no promises to anyone other than that nirvāṇa can be achieved by anyone who strives diligently to attain it. The definiteness of the goal of Buddhist striving is what makes that goal more worthy of pursuit than the goals of the Brāhmaṇas and the Jainas — this seems to be the message so tirelessly repeated in the Nikāyas. And so the Buddha Gotama is portrayed not as an atheist who claims to be able to prove God's nonexistence, but rather as a skeptic with respect to other teachers' claims to be able to lead their disciples to the highest good.

The above described reactions of the Buddha to the claims of other religious teachers are simply instances of his well-known aversion to speculative views concerning matters that are beyond man's ken. Speculation about such matters as whether the universe is beginningless or had a definite point at which it came into being was regarded as a distraction from pursuits closer at hand, and time spent thinking about such things was regarded as wasted time that could more profitably be spent on gradually ridding oneself of those counterproductive attitudes and beliefs that, when acted upon, bring further distress rather than the desired relief from the inconveniences of the

human condition. That the attitude of the Buddha as portrayed in the Nikāyas is more anti-speculative than specifically atheistic is illustrated by a refrain that is frequently repeated in the Brahmajāla Sutta. Here Gotama the Buddha differentiates himself from other teachers on the grounds that he, unlike them, does not propound doctrines concerning the nature of the self after death. Furthermore, unlike other teachers, the Buddha realizes that "these dogmatic tenets thus taken up and thus embraced will lead to such and such consequences and will lead to such and such a destiny."[4] What the reader of this sutta is left to conclude is that if the consequences of embracing certain tenets about the existence of the self were healthy, then Gotama would certainly recommend that his followers embrace them; but, since he in fact repeatedly warns people to avoid embracing certain tenets, there must be something about them that he regards as unhealthy or counter-productive.

Some insight into why it is that Gotama regarded the belief in God as unhealthy, as an obstacle to spiritual progress, can be gained by looking at the Devadaha-sutta, the one hundred first discourse in the Majjhima Nikāya.[5] Here we find an enumeration of the types of reasons that people often give for why they experience pleasure and pain. Among the five reasons, one is that pleasure and pain are created by God (issara). This view is not refuted in the sutta in question, which is a polemical dialogue against the Jainas. All that is said is that *if* God creates pleasure and pain, then the Jainas are made by an evil creator who inflicts much suffering on them through their programme of austerities; the Buddha, on the other hand, feels only pleasant feelings in his dispassionate state, and so, if pleasure be created by God, then the Buddha's creator must be a kind one. The other theories, incidentally, as to why men experience pleasure and pain are that such experiences are (1) the result of actions done in the past, (2) the result of fate, (3) innate to certain species of beings, and (4) the outcome of efforts undertaken in the present life. A Buddhist monk, says this sutta, realizes that the source of all displeasure is self-centred craving (taṇhā), while the source of pleasure is nonattachment and dispassion. And so, while the reader is left to conclude that it is attachment rather than God, actions in past lives, fate, type of birth or efforts in this life that is responsible for our experiences of sorrow, no

systematic argument is given in an attempt to disprove the existence of God.

Nor do we encounter actual arguments against the existence of a creator god in later Theravāda works such as Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga. Here it is explained that the Buddha's teaching that craving is the root cause of all distress is offered as a corrective to such false theories as that the world with all its woes is the creation of a god (issara), or that it is an evolution of primordial matter (padhāna) as in the Sāṁkhya system of philosophy, or that it is a product of time or fate or that it is an accidental by-product of material elements.[6] But how and why these theories are false is not explained.

2.0. VASUBANDHU'S DISCUSSION OF DIVINE CREATION

Like Buddhaghosa, the dogmatist Vasubandhu refers to alternative accounts of how the world and its attendant suffering began, and he too refers to the views that it began through divine creation, through an evolution of primordial matter, or on account of time, fate or pure chance. Unlike Buddhaghosa, however, Vasubandhu supplies arguments designed to show why these various theories are inadequate. Concerning the theory of divine creation of the world, Vasubandhu focuses his attention on three issues. First, he explores the question of how a single, undivided God, existing at all times, can create a complex universe the parts of which arise in temporal sequence. Second, he examines God's psychological motivation in creating the world. And third, he looks into the relationship between God as principal creator and auxiliary causal factors that go into making up the world. Vasubandhu treats these issues in about one page of Sanskrit prose. Later Buddhist philosophers wrote more extensively on each of these three issues than did Vasubandhu, but for the most part they did not explore other issues beyond these three. Let us look at the issues one by one, seeing first how Vasubandhu treated each one and then how later philosophers expanded on his treatment.

2.1. GOD'S UNITY

The position that Vasubandhu and most other Buddhist scholastics

accepted is that the world is caused by a virtually infinite number of causes, namely, the intentional actions of the countless sentient beings who have lived through all beginningless time. The belief that there is a single entity responsible for the rich diversity of experiences is fundamentally wrong-headed. "The world," says Vasubandhu, "does not have a single cause. Although they generate their own actions in birth after birth, the poor wretches of unripened wisdom, who experience the consequences of their own actions, wrongly contrive a supreme God."[7] And so it should be noted at the outset that Vasubandhu's arguments are designed to demonstrate the untenability of *any* theory whereby the world's diversity is traced to a single source. In particular, Vasubandhu points out that all his arguments for the necessary plurality of causes does as much damage to the Sāṁkhya theory of primordial matter (pradhāna, or prakṛti) as to the theory of divine creation.[8]

Given that understanding of Vasubandhu's own position, let us see how he criticized the positions that were contradictory to it. He begins by saying:

If the world had a single cause, whether that single cause be God or something else, the entire universe would have to arise all at once. But what we observe is that beings occur one after another. Now that fact could be a function of God's intending for each individual thing that it arise at a given time and disappear later. But in that case, since there are numerous intentions, it would turn out that the cause of the world is manifold. Moreover, that plurality of intentions would be simultaneous, for the reason that God, which is their source, putatively has no internal divisions.[9]

As will be discussed more fully below in section 3, this argument, or various modifications of it, was one to which Buddhist academics repeatedly resorted, not only in their arguments against theism but also in their arguments against any hypothetical entity that was supposed to retain its singularity while possessing a plurality of parts or characteristics. By the time of Vasubandhu a real thing (dravyasat vastu) is defined as any ultimate simple, that is, anything that cannot be reduced either physically or conceptually into smaller components.[10] Consistent with that understanding of what it means for something to be a real thing, Vasubandhu argues that if it is claimed that God is real and therefore simple, then it cannot consistently be said that he also have a plurality of separate intentions, one for each

object in the universe. But if God's uniformity is taken seriously, then he must have only one intention that is applicable to everything at once. And if that single intention is "Let it be," then everything must be at once. A simple God can create, it would seem, only a perfectly static universe. But the universe that we experience is not static.

Vasubandhu anticipates one objection to the above line of reasoning: "Now one might argue that even if God's intentions occur all at once, the [created] universe need not do so, since it is created in accordance with divine will."[11] God's mind could have exactly the same set of intentions at each moment in history, and in that case it could not be said that he undergoes change. His unchanging set of intentions could be: "Let A be at t_a, B at t_b, C at t_c . . . X at t_x." Each event in history could then occur in the sequence that we observe and still the sequence could occur according to a constant set of volitions. Vasubandhu rejects this possibility, saying: "That is not so, because there is nothing that distinguishes those [intentions at one time] from [those that occur] later."[12] The point appears to be that if God's set of volitions is constantly in the form "Let all the events of history occur in a prescribed order," the problem still remains that in order for the intentions to be realized by being translated into action, some change must occur in something; some potentiality must be converted into an actuality. That change that must occur cannot occur in God himself, for he is changeless. It must, then, occur outside God. But if that which converts God's intentions into actions is something outside God, then we should say that it, rather than God, is the creator of the universe.

This question of how potentiality becomes actuality is taken up somewhat more fully in Dharmakīrti's arguments adduced to demonstrate the nonexistence of God. The first observation that Dharmakīrti makes is that a permanent, unchanging entity such as God would have to have exactly the same nature before the creation of the world as after; there would be no difference whatsoever between God as creator and God as a being that is not yet a creator.[13] To be a cause of something is to undergo some change, as when a seed and the earth in which it is planted undergo changes in nature as they evolve into a shoot.[14] But if God suffers no changes in nature, then he surely cannot be regarded as the cause of anything.[15] Even if

there is no apparent change in nature within the cause itself, there must be some change in at least the cause's circumstances. For example, it must move from one place to another, or it must come into contact with an object with which it was not previously in contact. A weapon, for example, can be recognized as the cause of a wound in the body only if the body is not wounded before contact with the weapon, then contacts the weapon, and immediately upon such contact develops a wound. But if God is supposed to be omnipresent and therefore always in contact with everything, it cannot then be the case that God comes into contact with a thing with which he was not previously in contact, and so it is impossible that a change in some object be due solely to that object's change in relationship with God.[16]

Central to Dharmakīrti's argument is the claim that no action is possible without change, and so no unchanging thing can perform the action of creating the universe. In this connection he anticipates a possible counterexample that might be cited to disprove this central claim. A sense object such as a patch of colour apparently undergoes no change at all when it is perceived, and yet it is acknowledged as a cause of sight, as can be shown by pointing out that sight occurs when a patch of colour is present and fails to occur when no visible object is present. Is it not possible, therefore, that God can be an unchanging cause of the universe in the same way that a patch of colour is an unchanging cause of vision?[17] Dharmakīrti replies to this hypothetical counterargument by stating the principle that nothing can become an actuality without first being a potential. A visible object could never actually be seen unless it had the potential to be seen, and so a sense object must have an intrinsic potential to be sensed, and this potential must be in some way triggered into actuality. Similarly, if God is a creator of the universe, it must be admitted that he has a potential to create that exists prior to his actually creating anything. But if this is so, we must ask how that potential becomes realized. A visible object's potential to be seen, for example, is triggered into actuality by factors extrinsic to the visible object itself; there must be such factors as light, a sentient being with a functioning eye and an attentive mind and so forth, or else the potentially visible object cannot actually be seen. But is there a similar set of factors extrinsic to God that are required to trigger his potential to create? If so, then God is at least not a

sufficient condition for creation of the universe – whether or not he is a necessary condition is a separate question, to which we shall return in section 2.3 below. But if there are no factors extrinsic to God that are required to trigger his potential to create, then the conversion of God's potentiality into actuality must be seen as an action that he himself performs. But if God performs an action, then he must undergo change and thus cannot be permanent.

Dharmakīrti could also have pointed out in this context that serious problems result from saying that a thing has an intrinsic potential to act. For following the parallel to an argument made in another context, we can see that if we claim that a certain object has an intrinsic potential to act, then we are forced to conclude that the object realizes that potential in every moment of its existence.[18] For otherwise we have no means of explaining why that which is a mere potential at one moment becomes an actuality in the next. Just as an object that has an intrinsic potential to perish must perish in every moment of its existence (and must, therefore, exist for only one moment), so also God, if he has a wholly intrinsic potential to create, must create in every moment of his existence. But this means that there is never a time when God exists and the created universe does not. If God is beginningless, then so is the universe. And if the universe is beginningless, there is no creation after all and therefore no need to answer the question of who brought the creation about.

Post-Dharmakīrtian Buddhist academics, such as Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, provided a natural corollary to Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti 's conclusions that a changeless being cannot perform the action of creation. Not only can a changeless being not create the world of sequential events, says Śāntarakṣita, but he cannot even know about the world of change. Even if there were a simple, beginningless and endless being endowed with the faculty of intelligence, such a being could not know the events of the transitory world, for if such a being knew each event separately as it occurred, then he would have a plurality of cognitive acts and would lose his unity. But if he knew all events at once, then he would not know the essential characteristic of events, which is that they occur in sequence. Knowing all events in history at once would be like hearing every note in a melody played at once rather than in sequence. Just as the essence of a melody lies in

the sequentiality of the notes rather than in the mere presence of the notes, the essence of history lies in the sequentiality of events. And so, concluded Śāntarakṣita, if God is indeed simple and eternally changeless, he cannot participate in or know about history, and so those of us who are caught in history can derive no benefit from God's existence at all.

As can be seen from the above discussions, Vasubandhu's claim that a complex world cannot have a simple and thus eternal cause was a very powerful and rich claim indeed, which thinkers were still exploring and expanding upon for several centuries.

2.2. GOD'S MOTIVATIONS

A second question that Vasubandhu raises about the theory of divine creation focuses on the issue of why a self-sufficient and supposedly perfect being would either need or wish to create anything at all. Vasubandhu asks:

> For what purpose would God expend so much effort in creating the world? Perhaps for pleasure? Well, if God cannot make an effort without pleasure, then he has no control over that, and thus he has no control over anything else either![19]

Even more alarming than the possibility that God's creation of the universe was a mere indulgence in hedonism is the possibility that it was an act of cruelty, as evidenced by God's apparent willingness to allow his creatures to err and to suffer for their errors:

> And if God allows his creatures to be afflicted in hells by many guardians and takes pleasure in that, then we should prostrate ourselves before such a God as that! For the verse composed about him is very apt that goes:
>
> Because he torments, because he is severe,
> because he is cruel and full of might,
> because he devours flesh, blood and marrow
> they call him the Dreadful (Rudra).[20]

In contrast to the argument concerning the impossibility of the creator's unity, which became the principal Buddhist argument against the existence of God, this issue of the creator's motivations was not stressed by Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita or Kamalaśīla. In his Nyāyamañjarī, however, the Hindu theistic philosopher Jayanta Bhaṭṭa

devotes a section to arguments adduced by atheists before providing his own arguments in favour of God's existence. Among the arguments that Jayanta cites against God's existence is a version of Vasubandhu's question concerning motivations:

Did the Lord of creation undertake the creation of the universe just as it is after he had pondered upon a purpose? If the undertaking were purposeless, then he would be like a madman, in that his actions would not be preceded by reflection.[21]

But, Jayanta reports his atheist opponent as saying, God is putatively endowed with every possible joy and is free of passionate desire, and so it is difficult to see what he would think he had to gain by creating a universe without which he is already quite content. The standard answer that the theist gives to this question is that God created the world out of compassion. But, says Jayanta's adversary, for whom are we to believe that God has compassion? Compassion is a response to beings who are in pain. But surely there can have been no beings in pain before the creation of the universe; indeed, it was precisely because of the creation that previously contented souls began to feel pain and anguish. Moreover, since God is supposedly omnipotent, he might have created a universe in which sentient beings felt only joy and happiness instead of this sorry world in which what little pleasure there is is fleeting and serves only to taunt us in our misery. Perhaps we can conclude only that the creation was a joke (krīḍā) that God played to amuse himself. But, Jayanta has the atheist say, if the creation was a joke, it is one the humour of which is too subtle for the sentient beings to appreciate: "Neither is the Magnanimous One's joke appropriate, which causes dread in all his creatures, nor is this great effort to play it."[22]

As effective as this investigation into divine psychology might be in casting doubt upon the purity of the creator's motivation in making the world such as ours, this line of attack was not as commonly used by Buddhist academics as the more fundamentally persuasive arguments based on metaphysical considerations such as the problem of God's unity and permanence. There is no need, then, for us to dwell any longer upon the teleological issue.

2.3. GOD AS ONE CAUSAL FACTOR AMONG OTHERS

We have already seen how Vasubandhu, who was followed in this by Dharmakīrti, argued that God cannot be regarded as a sufficient condition of creation, that is, as a wholly self-sufficient creator with an innate self-actualizing potential to enact the creation of the world. But the possibility still remains open that God might be one of several necessary conditions in the origin of the universe. Historically, in fact, this view of creation, whereby God is a sentient, noncorporeal agent whose volition puts coeternal atoms into motion to make up macroscopic corporeal forms and puts eternal souls into these created physical bodies, is the one adopted by most Indian theists, who generally condemned the theory of creātio ex nihilō as absurd. In dealing with the possibility that God requires factors outside himself in order to create the universe, Vasubandhu first considers the possibility that the creator's dependence upon other things is due to his being himself an effect of other causes. If anyone were to hold such a view, then he would have to answer what it was that caused the creator's causes and so on ad infinītum. In fact, says Vasubandhu, this theory amounts to admitting that the universe is beginningless, which is the view accepted by Buddhists; but if one accepts that the universe is beginningless, there is of course no need to posit a creator at all.[23]

The possibility that God's dependence upon other things is in the nature of his being the effect of those other things is not to be taken very seriously, since no one actually advocates such a view, and Vasubandhu's refutation of it must be seen as a result of a good philosopher's penchant for thoroughness. Far more serious, however, is the claim that the world made up of insentient matter requires some conscious force to put it into motion. The principal argument of the theistic philosophers in India, in fact, was that since all complex products require sentient makers and since the universe is a complex product, the universe must have a sentient maker.

The above argument was one that the Buddhist academics tended not to reject; the medieval Indian Buddhists, in other words, did not advocate a position anything like the view accepted by most modern thinkers to the effect that the universe is for the most part uninhabited and that sentient life is a development that has come about relatively

recently in the history of an inconceivably vast expanse of lifeless matter. On the contrary, Buddhist mythology and systematic philosophy generally endorsed the view that the vast universe is everywhere populated by sentient beings and that the shape the universe takes is an accommodation to the force of the constant fruition of the multitudes of deeds performed by those sentient beings throughout the history of a beginningless universe. The medieval Buddhist view, in other words, is no more attuned to modern scientific views than is the theistic view of creation that the Buddhist academics sought to refute. What in particular Vasubandhu rejected in the theistic theory that the universe is sustained and influenced by noncorporeal sentience was the alleged *unity* of that sentience. If the material universe obeys the dictates of only one sentient force, namely God, then human beings and other sentient beings must be ultimately powerless, and their role in making all the manufactured items of ordinary life must ultimately be denied. As Vasubandhu puts the matter:

> He who accepts that there is but one cause of the universe must deny the obvious human effort in other matters. And he who fancies God as a creator along with [other] causal factors would merely be proclaiming his devotion, for we do not observe the operation of anything other than [the other] causal factors when something arises from them.[24]

Dharmakīrti did not develop this argument in his discussion of the theory of divine creation, but Śāntarakṣita expanded Vasubandhu's argument considerably. First, Śāntarakṣita recapitulates the theist's claim as follows: "Others regard God as the cause of all things that are produced. No insentient being, they say, produces its effects by itself."[25] But, he argues later, granting that an insentient universe cannot put itself into motion does not force us to conclude that there is but *one* sentient being who motivates insentient nature. On the contrary, in everything that we observe in the world around us we see that a multiplicity of effects is preceded by a multiplicity of creators. It takes many ants to make an anthill, and many men to construct a city and all the things in it; potters make pots, weavers make cloth, carpenters build houses and so forth, but we never observe that behind all these many manufacturers of things there is but a single sentient being at work with a single will.[26] If there were but a single purposive will driving all apparently independent sentient beings, there would be no

conflicts among beings, but this is hardly what we in fact observe. And so, concludes Śāntarakṣita, "We have no dispute with what is claimed in general, namely, that [products] are preceded by something intelligent, for diversity is born of deliberate action. In the argument for [products'] being preceded by a single, eternal intelligence, the conclusion is frivolous and [the evidence is] inconclusive, because it is observed that palaces and so forth are built by many people."[27]

Closely related to the general issue of whether God is one factor among many in building and sustaining the universe is the contention held by some theists that God's function is an essentially administrative one in that he keeps an account of all the deeds of his creatures and dispenses retribution in accordance with merit. The crucial question to be asked in this connection, say the Buddhists, is whether or not God actually tampers in any way with anyone's stock of merit and demerit. If not, then it must be admitted that God is essentially doing nothing more than being aware of the natural process of the ripening of past deeds that would presumably take place whether or not he were conscious of it. God would then be much like us, a powerless bystander witnessing a series of virtually inevitable events. Positing such a god has no explanatory value, and paying respects to such an impotent figure would provide little comfort to the worshipper. And so, if God's administrative talents are to command our respect, it would appear to be more promising to assume that God can and does play a decisive role in the maturation of the seeds of past deeds into present realities. And to say that God plays a decisive role amounts to saying that he accomplishes something that the natural fruition process itself would not accomplish. But what can God accomplish that could not be accomplished by a natural process of individual karmic seeds maturing into new realities? The most likely answer to this question is that God must somehow be able to alter the karmic configurations of sentient beings, to give beings rewards and punishments that they do not rightly deserve on the basis of the moral momentum of their own actions. But if God has this power to give those beings under his care gratuitous benefits, then we are entitled to ask why he does not consistently exercise this power so that all beings might always be happy. That he does not do so would appear to indicate either God's insensitivity to our pain or his cruel willingness

to see us undergo suffering that he could easily prevent. And so, the Buddhists conclude, whether God is unable to help us, unwilling to help us or unaware that we need help, he is of little value to man. We are better off conducting our affairs on our own powers and acting as if there is no divine power to help us in the task at hand, which is to transform our characters in such a way that we do only meritorious actions that naturally ripen into happy experiences in the present and future.

3.0. THE PROBLEM OF UNITY IN GOD, INDIVIDUALS AND UNIVERSALS

Of the issues concerning the existence of God that have been outlined above, the one that received the greatest attention from the Indian Buddhist academic tradition was that of the possibility of God's unity, simplicity and permanence.[28] In fact, this principal argument for the nonexistence of God may be seen as a special application of a form of argument that occurs repeatedly in Buddhist metaphysical treatises, it being but another instance of the general Buddhist preoccupation with the problem of unity in diversity. Generally speaking, the Buddhist philosophers denied the existence of anything that was supposed to retain its unity while occurring in or being related to a plurality of things, as this verse from the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra acknowledges:

> Personal identity, continuum, groups, causal conditions, atoms, primordial matter, and God the creator are regarded as mere ideas.[29]

Why each of these items is regarded as a purely conceptual fiction is that each is construed as a unity that is composed of a plurality of components. To give an exhaustive account of all occurrences of the Buddhist treatment of the one-many problem would be to tell nearly the whole story of Indian Buddhist philosophy, which is a bit like a symphony played on a one-stringed violin. Rather than attempting that monumental task here, let me simply outline four issues that at first glance might seem unrelated but which all turn out to be versions of the fundamental Buddhist claim that no whole exists over and above the existence of individual parts. Following this, I shall indicate briefly

how this same fundamental claim was behind the Buddhist rejection of real universals and real relations.

3.1. WHOLES AND PARTS

Among the first Buddhist philosophical writings to become familiar to a relatively wide audience within the English-reading world was the celebrated Questions of King Milinda. In this text the monk Nāgasena is depicted as explaining to King Milinda that the personal identity that most people naively believe they possess is in fact no more than a mere designation, a convenient fiction. To demonstrate this principle, Nāgasena argues that the person is, like a chariot, really analyzable into discrete components, any one of which may be altered or replaced or deleted without impairing the supposed integrity of the collection of those parts.[30] Just as a chariot's wheel can be replaced without altering the chariot's "identity" — that is, without making it a different chariot — a person's body can undergo changes, and some habits can be replaced by others, and knowledge can be gained or lost, and all these changes can occur without changing the person's "identity." But when we inquire into where this so-called identity resides, we find that it cannot reside in its totality in any one component part, nor can it reside in the set of parts taken as a whole. For if, let us say, the entire identity of the chariot were to reside in, for example, the left wheel, then the chassis and the axle and the right wheel would not be parts of the chariot at all, for the chariot would be just the left wheel. And if the left wheel should break and be replaced, we should have to say that the entire chariot was broken and replaced by an entirely different chariot. On the other hand, if we assume that the identity of the chariot resides in the collection of parts taken as a whole, then, since the whole changes any time any part changes, to replace any part would be to change the identity of the whole; to replace a single screw in the chariot would be to create a wholly different chariot. But it goes against our intuitions of the chariot's identity to say either that the chassis is not part of the chariot or that the change of a tiny part creates an entirely different chariot. This intuition of identity, then, is no more than an intuition. It resides

purely in the mind of the beholder and has no counterpart in the world outside the mind. What we take to be a person is in fact devoid of personal identity. Further arguments along this line are developed in Vasubandhu (pp. 461—479) and throughout the Buddhist academic tradition.

In Uddyotakara's Nyāyavārttika under Nyāya-sūtra 2.1.31—33 there is a discussion concerning whether or not it is justifiable to infer, when one sees the part of a tree that one is facing, that the tree has a backside as well. Uddyotakara represents the Buddhists as being unable to regard such an inference as justifiable. In order to use an observation of A to serve as a sign of B, say the Buddhists, one must have seen A and B together at some point and one must never have seen A without B. But it is impossible to see the face and back of a three-dimensional object simultaneously, and so one can never legitimately conclude that there is a backside to a tree or any other large object that one is facing. The Naiyāyika is spared from having to hold such a patently silly view, thinks Uddyotakara, because he believes it possible to see not only the parts of the tree but the tree itself as a whole object. To see the front of a tree is to see a tree, and to see a tree is to know immediately that it must have a backside as well, since having sides facing all directions is part of what it is to be a tree. But the Buddhists, says Uddyotakara, continue to dispute this Naiyāyika claim by availing themselves of the following line of argument. We cannot say that the tree-as-a-whole resides entirely in any one part, such as a single leaf, for if that part were destroyed we should then have to say that the whole tree was destroyed. On the other hand, we cannot say that the tree-as-a-whole exists only partially in the single leaf, since that would entail admitting that the tree-as-a-whole is partite, which runs counter to our intuition that a whole is a unit rather than a mere assemblage of smaller units. And so, say the Buddhists, the tree-as-a-unit resides only in our mind and is not something that can be seen or in any way sensed as a datum of the world external to awareness.

In Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti under kārikā 5.50, Diṅnāga argues that proper names (yadṛcchāśabda), usually regarded as words that apply only to given individuals, are in fact a type of class noun, since what we ordinarily think of as individuals are in fact complex objects. And

so, just as the word "cow" applies to a plurality of objects that the intellect gathers together and treats as a unit called a class, a proper name like "Devadatta" applies to a plurality of traits that the intellect collects and treats as a unit called a person. But persons and classes are both convenient fictions for the supposed unity of which there is no justification in the facts of the world external to consciousness.

In the examples given so far, objects that are usually regarded naively as units have turned out on closer reflection to be complexes that because of their complexity in fact lack unity. Atoms, on the other hand, are defined as absolute simples in that they are divisions of matter than which nothing could be smaller. But the only unity than which nothing could be smaller must be without any dimension at all and so must not be a unit of matter at all, since unlike all other matter the atom cannot occupy space and be resistent to other units of matter occupying the same space. The same arguments are applied in some Buddhist works to the smallest possible unit of time, the moment (kṣaṇa).

Individuality, then, is merely an idea (cittamātra), say the Buddhist academics, for reason shows that things that are given in experience as existing, such phenomena as persons and chariots, have no real individuality, while things that theoretically have true individuality, such things as atoms and moments, cannot really exist.

3.2. UNIVERSALS AND RELATIONS

At Pramāṇasamuccaya 5.1—4, Diṅnāga argues that the intellect's act of gathering a plurality of individuals together under a single concept is done without any basis in a real unity binding the objects together in the world external to consciousness. There are, in other words, no real universals that retain their unity while residing in a plurality of individuals. At Pramāṇasamuccaya 5.17 Diṅnāga argues that if there were such a thing as a universal like cowness, then either it would have to reside in its entirety in a single individual cow or it would have to reside partially in each individual cow. In the former case there would then be only one cow, which is not what we in fact observe. In the latter case the universal cowhood would have internal divisions and so would not be a unity, which runs counter to the usual

definition of a universal. Therefore universals do not reside in objects in any way at all, says Diṅnāga; rather, they are superimposed by the mind upon the objects of experience.

Using an argument that is parallel to the argument against the existence of real universals, Diṅnāga concludes that there are also no relations in the real world. For a relation is supposed to be a unity that binds a plurality of relata together. But if the relation is a real object in the world, then it must reside either wholly in a single relatum or partially in each, neither of which consequences is possible. Similarly, resemblance cannot be a real feature of objects in the world, for resemblance is a kind of relation. Resemblance, like any other relation and like universals, is something that the intellect superimposes upon the objects of experience rather than something that is a discovered feature of objects that they have outside our experience of them.

4.0. CONCLUSION

The doctrine that there is no permanent creator who superintends creation and takes care of his creatures accords quite well with each of the principles known as the four noble truths of Buddhism. The first truth, that distress is universal, is traditionally expounded in terms of the impermanence of all features of experience and in terms of the absence of genuine unity or personal identity in the multitude of physical and mental factors that constitute what we experience as a single person. As we saw above, the principal Buddhist arguments against the existence of God focus on the impossibility of permanence and unity in the causal structure of the universe. The second noble truth, that distress is the outcome of one's own unrealistic aspirations, is traditionally seen as ruling out the erroneous view that distress is something inflicted upon creatures by a cosmic superintendent or by other circumstances completely beyond their control. The third noble truth, that distress can be eliminated by divesting oneself of all unrealistic aspirations, rules out the view that sentient beings, as powerless victims of a divine will, have no alternative to a life of constant frustration. And the fourth noble truth, that the best means of removing unrealistic desires is to follow a methodical course of

self-discipline, counters the view that the road to happiness lies in obedience to divine will or in trying to manipulate the sentiments of a cosmic intelligence through prayer or ritual.

Atheism, then, is a doctrine of fundamental importance within Buddhist religious philosophy rather than a mere accretion acquired through historical accident. As such it was a doctrine for which the Buddhist apologists during the academic period were strongly motivated to find good arguments. Although a variety of arguments were used, the most frequently used and the most powerful was a special application of the general Buddhist commitment to the principle that there can be no real unity binding together any plurality of things and that all notions of unity in plurality are therefore superimposed gratuitously upon experience by the experiencing mind. From this same principle the Buddhist scholastics in India also derived their commitment to nominalism or conceptualism in the realm of linguistic philosophy and to the theory of radical momentariness in the realm of metaphysics.

NOTES

1 Davids and Carpenter (1890), p. 18.
2 Davids and Carpenter (1890), p. 235.
3 Davids and Carpenter (1890), p. 240.
4 "Tayidam, bhikkave, Tathāgato pajānāti: 'Ime diṭṭhiṭṭhānā evaṃ-gahitā evaṃ-parāmaṭṭhā evaṃ-gatikā bhavissanti evaṃ-abhisamparāyā ti.'" Davids and Carpenter (1890), p. 30.
5 Chalmers (1898), pp. 214—228.
6 "samudayañānam issarapadhānakālasabhāvādīhi loko pavattatī ti akāraṇe kāraṇābhimānapavattaṁ hetumhi vippaṭipattiṁ." (Knowledge of the origin [of distress] puts an end to misconception with respect to causes, which concerns the belief that something is a cause when it is not, such as that the world arises owing to God, primordial matter, time or the inherent properties [of the material elements].) Buddhaghosa, p. 1156.
7 "tasmān na lokasyaikaṁ kāraṇam asti. svāny evaiṣām karmāṇi tasyāṁ tasyāṁ jātau janayanti. akṛtabuddhayas tu varākāḥ svaṁ svaṁ vipākaphalaṁ cānubhavanta īśvaram aparaṁ mithyā parikalpayanti." Vasubandhu, p. 102, under Abhidharmakośa 2.64.
8 "evaṁ pradhāne'pi yathāyogaṁ vācyam." Vasubandhu, p. 102.
9 "yadi hy ekam eva kāraṇam īśvaraḥ syād anyad vā yugapat sarveṇa jagatā bhavitavyaṁ syāt. dṛśyate ca bhāvānāṁ kramasaṁbhavaḥ. sa tarhi cchandavaśād īśvarasya syād ayam idānīm utpadyatām nirudhyatām ayam paśćād iti. cchandabhedāt tarhi siddham anekaṁ kāraṇaṁ syāt. sa cāpi cchandabhedo yugapat syāt taddhetor īśvarasyābhinnatvāt." Vasubandhu, pp. 101—102.

[10] yatra bhinne na tadbuddhir anyāpohe dhiyā ca tat/
ghaṭārthavat saṁvṛtisat paramārthasad anyathā//AK 6.4//
Vasubandhu, p. 334.
[11] "yaugapadye'pīśvaracchandānāṁ jagato na yaugapadyam. yathācchandam utpādanād iti cet." Vasubandhu, p. 102.
[12] "na. teṣāṁ paścād viśeṣābhāvāt." Vasubandhu, p. 102.
[13] yathā tat kāraṇam vastu tathaiva tad akāraṇam/
yadā tat kāraṇaṁ kena mataṁ neṣṭam akāraṇam//PV 1.23//
(That thing [which like God is permanent] is exactly the same way when it is not a cause as when it is a cause. When it is a cause, by what is it so recognized? Why is it not believed [to remain] a noncause?) Dharmakīrti, p. 16.
[14] svabhāvapariṇāmena hetur aṅkurajanmani/
bhūmyādis tasya saṁskāre tadviśeṣasya darśanāt//PV 1.27//
(Soil and so forth, owing to a transformation of nature, is a cause of a seedling's arising, since the seedling's attributes [such as growth] are observed in the soil's constitution.) Dharmakīrti, p. 17.
[15] svabhāvabhedena vinā vyāpāro'pi na yujyate/
nityasyāvyatirekatvāt sāmarthyaṁ ca duranvayam//PV 1.25//
(No activity is possible without a change in nature. Since a permanent thing is unchanging, its capacity to act is hard to believe.) Dharmakīrti, p. 17.
[16] śastrauṣadhābhisaṁbandhāc caitrasya vraṇarohaṇe/
asaṁbaddhasya kiṁ sthāṇoḥ kāraṇatvaṁ na kalpyate//PV 1.24//
(Owing to his contact with a weapon or with medicines, Caitra gets wounded or healed. But a permanent thing that is disassociated [from activity] is not considered to be a cause.) Dharmakīrti, pp. 16—17.
[17] yathā viśeṣeṇa vinā viṣayendriyasaṁhatiḥ/
buddher hetus tathedaṁ cet . . .//PV 1.28//
(But could this [creation of the world by God] be similar to a sense-faculty's contacting a sense-object, which without changing [serves as] a cause of awareness?) Dharmakīrti, p. 17.
[18] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (pp. 453 f.) reports a Buddhist argument for momentariness based on the principle that if a thing has an intrinsic, self-realizing potential, then that potential must be constantly actualized, for otherwise there is no accounting for how the potential becomes actualized just when it does and no sooner or later.
[19] "kaś ca tāvad īśvarasyeyatā sargaprayāsenārthaḥ. yadi prītis tāṁ tarhi nāntareṇopāyaṁ śaktaḥ karttum iti na tasyām īśvaraḥ syāt tathaiva cānyasmin." Vasubandhu, p. 102.
[20] "yadi ceśvaraḥ narakādiṣu prajāṁ bahubhiś cetibhir upasṛṣṭaṁ sṛṣṭvā tena prīyate namo'stu tasmai tādṛśāyeśvarāya. sugītaś cāyaṁ tam ārabhya śloko bhavati.

> yan nirdahati yat tīkṣṇo yad ugro yat pratāpavān/
> māṁsaśoṇitamajjādo yat tato rudra ucyate//

Vasubandhu, p. 102.
[21] "kiṁ kimapi prayojanam anusaṁdhāya jagatsarge pravarttate prajāpatir evam eva vā. niṣprayojanāyāṁ pravṛttāv aprekṣāpūrvakāritvād unmattatulyo'sau bhavet." Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, p. 192.

[22] na ca krīḍāpi niḥśeṣajanatātaṅkakāriṇī/
āyāsabahulā ceyaṁ kartum yuktā mahātmanaḥ//
Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, p. 192.
[23] "kāraṇāntarabhedāpekṣaṇe vā neśvara eva kāraṇaṁ syāt. teṣām api ca kramotpattau kāraṇāntarabhedāpekṣaṇād anavasthāprasaṅgaḥ syād ity anantarabhedāyāḥ kāraṇa-paraṁparāyā anāditvābhyupagamād ayam īśvarakāraṇādhimuktaḥ śākyapūrvīyam eva nyāyaṁ nātivṛttaḥ syāt." (On the other hand, if God is dependent on a variety of other causal factors to create the world, then he is not in fact the cause of the world. And if other causal factors arise one after another, then there would be an infinite regress, since each would require a variety of anterior causes. And so he who believes that God is the creator does not really reject the Buddhist position, since he too believes that the sequence of causal conditions, in which one comes immediately after the other, is beginningless.) Vasubandhu, p. 102.
[24] "ekaṁ khalv api jagataḥ kāraṇaṁ parigṛhṇatānyeṣām arthānāṁ pratyakṣaḥ puruṣakāro nihnutaḥ syāt. sahāpi ca kāraṇaiḥ kārakam īśvaraṁ kalpayatā kevalo bhaktibādaḥ syāt. kāraṇebhyo'nyasya tadutpattau vyāpārādarśanāt." Vasubandhu, p. 102.
[25] sarvotpattimatām īśam anye hetuṁ pracakṣate/
nācetanaṁ svakāryāṇi kila prārabhate svayam//TS 46//
Śāntarakṣita, p. 51.
[26] kintu nityaikasarvajñanityabuddhisamāśrayaḥ/
sādhyavaikalyato'vyāpter na siddhiṁ upagacchati//TS 72//
tathā hi saudhasopānagopurāṭṭālakādayaḥ/
anekānityavijñānapūrvakatvena niścitāḥ//TS 73//
(But [the world's] dependence upon that which is eternal, one, and of unchanging, omniscient mind is a conclusion that does not admit of proof. Because [the property that the theist cites as evidence for that conclusion, namely, the fact that the world is a complex product] is not pervaded [by the property of depending upon that which is eternal, etc.], for the property that is in need of proof does not extend [to all created things]. For example, such things as houses, staircases, gateways and towers are known to be preceded by many beings with changing mental states.) Śāntarakṣita, p. 63.
[27] buddhimatpūrvakatvaṁ ca sāmānyena yad iṣyate/
tatra naiva vivādo no vaiśvarūpyaṁ hi karmajam//TS 80//
nityaikabuddhipūrvatvasādhane sādhyaśūnyatā/
vyabhicāraś ca saudhāder bahubhiḥ karaṇekṣaṇāt//TS 81//
Śāntarakṣita, p. 65.
[28] Another issue that came to be frequently discussed by the academics after Diṅnāga's time was that of God as a revealer of truths to which mankind would without revelation have no access. As this issue has been treated in Hayes (1984), I have not discussed it any further in the present writing.
[29] pudgalaḥ saṁtatiḥ skandhāḥ pratyayā aṇavas tathā/
pradhānam īśvaraḥ kartā cittamātraṁ vikalpyate//
Vaidya, p. 34.
[30] This discussion occurs in Śāstrī, pp. 19—20.

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Buddha and God: A Contrastive Study in Ideas about Maximal Greatness*

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This study has three main goals: first, to suggest what kind of enterprise Buddhist intellectuals were engaged in when they began to construct systematic theories about the properties essential to a Buddha; second, to offer a moderately detailed presentation of one such systematic theory, that of classical Indian Yogācāra; third, to engage in a critical, though very tentative and preliminary, comparison of this system with one example of a Christian intellectual's attempt to delineate the properties essential to God.

BUDDHA, BUDDHAS, AND BUDDHAHOOD

The term "Buddha" was first appropriated (though not invented) by Buddhists as an honorific title for a specific historical individual. Rather little is known about this individual; it is not even certain in which century he lived.[1] But it is clear that this person and only this person was the primary and original referent of the term. It is also true, however, that, even in the earliest texts available, it is possible to see the beginnings of a self-

* Earlier versions of this article were given at the University of Pennsylvania in February 1987 and at the American Academy of Religion's (AAR) annual meeting in Boston in December 1987. I am grateful to Wilhelm Halbfass and Kenneth Kraft for making the Pennsylvania presentation possible and for their helpful comments. I am also grateful to my copanelists at the AAR (Steven Collins, Charles Hallisey, Richard Hayes, Roger Jackson, and Joe Wilson); their papers and comments have made this a much better study than it would otherwise have been. Finally, I must thank M. David Eckel for taking the time to give me a detailed critique of an earlier draft.

[1] Heinz Bechert's *Die Lebenszeit des Buddha—das älteste feststehende Datum der indischen Geschichte?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) gives a thorough review of the state of play on this question. He reviews the two major contenders for the date of Buddha's death—the "long chronology," which places it 218 years before Aśoka's consecration (i.e., ca. 486 B.C.E.), and the "short chronology," which places it 100 years before Aśoka's consecration (i.e., ca. 368 B.C.E.)—and dismisses both datings as later constructions in the service of nonhistorical ends (p. 52). He concludes that all indications suggest that the Buddha's life ended not long before Alexander's wars of conquest spread to the Indian subcontinent in the second half of the fourth century B.C.E. (pp. 54–55).

 0022-4189/89/6904-0003$01.00

conscious attempt on the part of Buddhists to broaden the term, to delineate a universal "Buddhahood" (*buddhatā* or *buddhatva* in Sanskrit), and to assert that many individuals have partaken of this in the past and that many more will do so in the future. That is, Buddhists started to think about what properties an individual must have in order to be a Buddha (and thus to give form and content to the universal Buddhahood) and also to tell stories about the past and future individuals who have had and will have these properties.

The first part of this process—that of describing the properties an individual must have in order to be a Buddha—can most easily be seen at work in the early lists of epithets with which "our" Buddha (Śākyamuni) is dignified. One example will suffice to give some flavor of this part of the process: the Buddha is often honored with nine epithets, the famous *iti pi so gāthā*, especially common in the Pali *Nikāyas.* He is called (1) worthy, (2) fully and completely awakened, (3) accomplished in knowledge and virtuous conduct, (4) well gone, (5) knower of worlds, (6) unsurpassed guide for those who need restraint, (7) teacher of gods and men, (8) awakened one, and (9) lord.[2] This list, especially when taken together with other common epithets of the Buddha such as *tathāgata* ("he who has come[or: gone] thus") or *anuttarasamyaksambuddha* ("unexcelled completely awakened one"), describes a figure of unmatched religious virtuosity, one whose profundity of knowledge and insight is supreme and whose skill in helping others toward salvation is unparalleled. In almost every epithet applied to the Buddha in the early texts this thrust towards the superlative is very clear: the goal is to predicate every possible good quality of the Buddha and to show that he has it to the greatest possible extent. Something of this can also be seen in what the later Theravādin commentators have to say about the ninefold epithet list just mentioned. Each of the epithets in it was analyzed and commented upon, and highly stereotyped glosses were developed for each. The ninefold list, though, had far less influence upon the systematic thought of the purely Indian schools; there, different lists of Buddha-properties (*guṇa*) became standard. But the underlying intellectual process was the same: the development of and commentary upon these epithet lists show a desire to give a systematic analysis of what it is to be a Buddha, a desire to limn maximal greatness.

The other part of the process, that of telling stories about those past and future individuals who may appropriately be described by these epithets, can be clearly seen at work in the very early list of six Buddhas who preceded Śākyamuni,[3] and in the *Jātaka* stories, stories about the previous

[2] See T. W. Rhys-Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, eds., *Dīgha-Nikāya,* 3 vols. (London: Pali Text Society, 1890–1911), 1:49 and passim.

[3] The list of six former Buddhas is found (in the mouth of Śākyamuni) in Rhys-Davids and Carpenter, eds., 2:2.

lives of Śākyamuni and (in some cases) his interactions with earlier members of the class, most prominently with that figure known as Vispaśvin.[4] Studying the development of this body of mythology and folklore, and the religious practices that were connected with it, would provide a great deal of insight into the ways in which ordinary, nonvirtuoso Buddhists then understood and related themselves to the universal category "Buddha." But such a study will not be the focus of interest in what follows. I am interested here, not in Buddhism "on the ground," but rather in Buddhism as analyzed and systematized by professional (i.e., monastic) intellectuals, that is, in the theories developed by these intellectuals about the properties essential to any possessor of Buddhahood.[5]

This is clearly an enormous field, one that has scarcely yet been touched by contemporary Western scholars of Buddhism. An ideal name for it, perhaps, would be "buddhology" by analogy with the Christian discipline of christology, were it not for the fact that the former term has already been appropriated by Westerners as a label for all scholarly discourse about Buddhism.[6] Another possible label for the enterprise, by analogy with the *īśvaravāda* used by Indian philosophers to denote that intellectual discipline which ascertains, through debate, the properties proper to *īśvara,* or God, might be *buddhavāda.* This could prove a useful label, even though it is not used, so far as I am aware, by any Indian Buddhist thinker. The non-Sanskritist should bear in mind that I use this term to denote the discourse used by Buddhists to delineate the properties essential to any Buddha.

For the metaphysically minded it might be useful to think of *buddhavāda* as a systematic attempt to define and list those attributes which something must have in order,[7] within the constraints of Buddhist

[4] On former Buddhas in general see Richard F. Gombrich, "The Significance of Former Buddhas in the Theravādin Tradition," in *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula,* ed. S. Balasooriya et al. (London: Gordon Fraser, 1980), pp. 62–72.

[5] I borrow the phrase "on the ground" from Gregory Schopen, "Burial *ad sanctos* and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism," *Religion* 17 (1987): 193–225. Schopen appears to hold, for reasons unstated and unfathomable to me, the imperialistic view that Buddhism "on the ground," Buddhism as actually practiced, is somehow more interesting, a more desirable and appropriate object of study, than (say) the Buddhism expressed in texts by professional intellectuals. The truth, of course, is that *both* are interesting and appropriate objects of scholarly study. What Buddhist monks in Aśoka's India did (and what inscriptional evidence tells us about what they did) is, for those who like that kind of thing, a worthy and appropriate object of study, just as is what Sanskrit-writing intellectuals in Gupta India wrote. The academy is, fortunately, large enough for both interests.

[6] David Snellgrove uses the term "buddhalogy" for the discipline I intend here. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent this usage will gain scholarly currency. See Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors,* 2 vols. (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 1:32.

[7] The ontologically neutral "something" *(kiṃcit)* seems preferable here to the more loaded "being" or "existent." As I shall suggest, Buddha turns out to be not some particular existent but rather the totality of all existents.

metaphysics, to be maximally great.[8] This, of course, is a purely formal definition; the term "greatness" has not yet been given any content. It will be given some substance in what follows. I mention it here only to give a sense of the kind of intellectual enterprise under way, and to suggest some (possibly) useful parallels with (somewhat) similar Western metaphysical enterprises. If there are any transcultural universals in the sphere of religious thinking, it is probable that among them is the impulse to characterize, delineate, and, if possible, exhaustively define maximal greatness. This tends to be done by listing, developing, refining, and arguing about just which attributes any possessor of maximal greatness *must* possess. Debates within Christian theological circles about whether, for example, God is atemporal—although they often deal with surface issues such as the logical problems created by asserting God's atemporality (can God be both atemporal and an agent?) or the hermeneutical problems created by denying it (since many of Western Christianity's most influential systematic thinkers after Augustine have made a great deal of God's atemporality, can any theology that denies it remain Christian?)—actually tend to rest upon deeper intuitions about whether atemporality is a proper attribute for a maximally great being to possess. So also, mutatis mutandis, for debates about whether and in what sense it is proper to say that a Buddha is omniscient. Such "deeper" intuitions are deeper not in the sense that they are more profound or more important than the "surface" logical and hermeneutical issues; they are deeper only in the sense that they operate at a level of the individual's or tradition's psyche which is more difficult of access and which almost always appears only in the subtext of those texts openly debating such questions as God's atemporality or a Buddha's omniscience. Philosophers from all cultures tend not to openly discuss whether and why, say, the attribute of atemporality contributes to maximal greatness; it is usually perfectly (intuitively) obvious to those moving within a particular tradition that it does (or that it does not).[9] The overt debate then centers upon whether an account of the attribute in question can be given that is both internally coherent and consistent with other propositions whose truth the tradition holds dear.

One way, then, of understanding something of the metaphysical preconceptions of any religious tradition is to look at those attributes usually predicated by the tradition of any possessor of maximal greatness. I have this enterprise in mind in the study that follows. This is, of course, only a

[8] Thomas V. Morris and William J. Wainwright have recently provided some useful discussion of this terminology as it is used in Christian philosophical theology. See Morris, "Perfect Being Theology," *Nous* 21 (1987): 19–30; Wainwright, "Worship, Intuitions and Perfect Being Theology," *Nous* 21 (1987): 31–32.

[9] Morris (p. 26) gives a list of such intuitively obvious (obvious, anyway, to a Christian theist) properties. I shall return to this below.

propaedeutic for a broader comparative enterprise. It would, I think, be illuminating to engage in a systematic comparison of those properties which have been taken to be great-making by (some part of) the Buddhist tradition with those that have been taken to be great-making by (some part of) the Christian tradition and to try and determine why the lists differ when they do. If nothing else, intuitions about what makes for maximal greatness might be called into question. And challenges of this kind often force revealing post hoc rational justifications for profound religious intuitions, justifications from which there may be much to learn. I shall make some suggestions along these lines in what follows.

MATERIALS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF BUDDHAHOOD IN THE YOGĀCĀRA TRADITION

I shall now offer a descriptive analysis of the most important among those properties regarded as essential to any possessor of Buddhahood by the thinkers of preclassical and classical Indian Yogācāra. By the former I mean the thought expressed in those Yogācāra texts which predate Asaṅga and Vasubandhu and which were clearly influential upon their thinking; and by the latter I mean precisely the early fifth-century C.E. synthesis produced by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. I do not mean to imply that this synthesis was conceptually monolithic; such is certainly not the case. There are many interesting differences of emphasis (and even of substance) between the thought of Asaṅga and that of Vasubandhu, but these differences will not be of central importance for this study.

Even as regards the preclassical and classical Indian Yogācāra I shall be very selective and shall concentrate my attention upon two important ways in which the texts of this period analyze and describe what they take to be essential to Buddhahood. The first is analytical: there is a set of six categories used in Yogācāra texts (and elsewhere) to explore, analyze, and define the various dimensions of Buddhahood. The categories are (1) essential nature (*svabhāva*), (2) cause (*hetu*), (3) result (*phala*), (4) action (*karman*), (5) endowment (*yoga*), and (6) function (*vṛtti*). A set of categories such as this is a purely formal analytical tool; it can be used to analyze any concept whatever. One can ask of anything what it essentially is (*svabhāva*), where it comes from and what its effects are (*hetu* and *phala*), what sorts of actions it engages in (*karman*), what qualities it possesses (*yoga*), and how it functions (*vṛtti*). There are instances in Yogācāra texts of just this set of analytical questions being applied to topics other than Buddhahood. An example occurs in Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*[AS],[10] a

[10] This text survives only partially in its original Sanskrit. For an edition of the fragments see V. V. Gokhale, "Fragments from the Abhidharmasamuccaya of Asaṅga," *Journal of the Bombay*

"kind of classified lexicon of technical terms of the Mahāyāna abhidharma, i.e., the works of the Yogācāra school or the Vijñānavādins," as Takasaki puts it.[11] In this text, the six categories mentioned are employed in the context of a discussion of "philosophical analysis according to meaning" (*arthaviniścaya*). The general point of the passage is that if one wants to engage in an analysis of something's (some word's or concept's) meaning or referent, one should proceed by exploring the six dimensions of meaning in that term or concept (*ṣaḍarthān ārabhya viniścayo bhavati*). The six dimensions are the six categories just mentioned.[12] It seems likely that this more general use of the six categories in connection with the semantic analysis of terms was well known in the Yogācāra tradition, alongside the more specialized application to the analysis of Buddhahood,[13] although it is difficult now to disentangle which (if either) of these two uses was chronologically earlier.

The earliest surviving instance of an explicit application of the six categories to Buddhahood seems to be in a set of four verses found in two important early texts, the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* [BBhS] and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* [MSA].[14] In these texts the verses are used to ana-

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Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 23 (1947): 13–38. Pralhad Pradhan had produced a reconstruction of the entire text into Sanskrit, based on the extant fragments and the Tibetan and Chinese translations. See Pradhan, *Abhidharmasamuccaya of Asaṅga* (Santiniketan: Visvabharati, 1950). Walpola Rahula has translated the whole reconstruction into French: *Le compendium de la super-doctrine (philosophie) (Abhidharmasamaccaya) d'Asaṅga* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1971). Note that the abbreviations used in this paper are AS—*Abhidharmasamuccaya;* ASBh—*Abhidharmasamuccayabbhāṣyam;* BBhS—*Buddhabhūmisūtra;* BBhV—*Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna;* DT—Derge Bstan 'gyur (Tanjur); *MS—Mahāyānsaṅgraha;* MSA—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra;* MSABh—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣyam;* MSAṬ—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāraṭīkā;* MSAVBh—*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāravṛttibhāyam;* MSBh—*Mahāyānasaṅgrahabhāṣyam;* MSU—*Mahāyānasaṅgrahopanibandhana;* PT—Peking Bstan 'gyur (Tanjur).

[11] Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra): Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1966), p. 406.

[12] This section of the AS does not survive in Sanskrit. For the Tibetan text see DT, sems-tsam RI 117I7–117b5. For a Sanskrit reconstruction see Pradhan, pp. 102–3. Sthiramati's comments in the ASBh are especially helpful here. See Nathmal Tatia, ed., *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣyam* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1976), pp. 141–42.

[13] Takasaki calls this the "description of ultimate reality." See Takasaki Jikidō, "Description of the Ultimate Reality by Means of the Six Categories in Mahāyāna Buddhism," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 9 (1961): 740–731. Takasaki also points out that the six categories are used in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, but only in the context of *śabdavidyā* (grammatical learning), one of the five sciences into which Buddhist theorists divide the branches of intellectual learning. The use of these categories in connection with grammar and semantic analysis has obvious links with the AS's use of them to expound *arthaviniścaya*. The categories are also used in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (together with another four, making ten in all), but since the doctrinal emphases of this text are in many respects different from those of the MSA and BBhS, I shall not make use of it in discussing them further.

[14] See Nishio Kyoo, ed., *The Buddhabhūmi-sutra and the Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna of Çilabhadra* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 1982), 1: 22–23; MSA 9: 56–59; Sylvain Lévi, *Mahāyāna-*

lyze "pure Dharma Realm" (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*), effectively a synonym for Buddhahood and a term about which I shall have more to say later. The relative chronology of the BBhS and MSA is obscure. The former is a short sūtra,[15] and the latter is verse-*śāstra* in twenty-one chapters and 805 verses,[16] and while direct dependence of some kind is obvious, it is possible that the BBhS borrowed from the MSA, that the MSA borrowed from the BBhS, or that the four verses in question were a separate unit of tradition, used independently by the authors of both.[17] I incline to the view that the BBhS is earlier than the MSA and acted as a source for it, but the decision taken on this issue will not affect the central argument of this article. In addition to these four verses, the six categories are also used in the two concluding verses of the MSA, verses which are then cited by Asaṅga in the final chapter of the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha* [MS].[18] Naturally, there are commentaries and subcommentaries on all of these texts; I shall make use

Sūtrālaṃkāra: Exposé de la doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon la système Yogācāra (Paris: Librarie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1907–11), 1:44.

[15] The BBhS is difficult to date. It appears to use the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* as a source, and if this is correct the terminus a quo of the former is ca. 300 C.E. The dependence of the BBhS upon the *Saṃdhinirmocana* is suggested by the fact that the opening scene-setting description is virtually identical in each text. See Nishio, 1:1–4; Étienne Lamotte, *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra: l'Explication des mystères* (Paris: Adrian Maisonneuve, 1935), pp. 31–35. Lamotte also provides some discussion of this issue in his translation of the MS: *La somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga (Mahāyānasaṃgraha)*, 2 vols. (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1973), 2:317–19. (Hereafter referred to as *La somme.*) John P. Keenan has recently argued in "Pure Land Systematics in India: The *Buddabhūmisūtra* and the *Trikāya* Doctrine," *Pacific World* 3 (1987): 29–35, that the BBhS may be even earlier than the *Saṃdhinirmocana.* In spite of this uncertainty about the terminus a quo, the terminus ad quem for the BBhS is still more difficult to arrive at. It depends principally on the decision arrived at about the relative dating of the BBhS and the MSA (see below).

[16] There are problems with both the chapter division and verse enumeration of the MSA, problems too complex to explore fully here. The surviving manuscript of the Sanskrit text of the MSA does not mark all the chapter divisions, though it does mention a total of twenty-one chapters. The two printed editions, based on this manuscript, are unsure where to divide chap. 21 from chap. 20, and thus give a final chap. 20–21 with 61 verses. See Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:175–189; Sitansusekhar Bagchi, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra of Asaṅga* (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1970), pp. 168–80. Following the Tibetan translation found in PT (though there are differences in DT), I regard the chapter given as 20–21 by Lévi and Bagchi as actually consisting in two chapters. The division should be made after verse 42. MSA 21 thus has, in my reading, 19 verses.

[17] Both Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, in their commentaries to the MSA, strongly suggest that it is dependent upon the BBhS. See MSAṬ, DT sems-tsam BI 72b–c; MSAVBh, DT sems-tsam MI 133a7–133b7. Hakamaya Noriaki also expresses this view. See Hakamaya, "Shōjō hokkai kō" [Research on the purity of Dharma Realm], *Nantō Bukkyō* 37 (1976): 1. Takasaki seems to have once held this view (*A Study,* 403–4), but does so no longer (*Nyoraizō shisō no keisei* [The formation of Tathāgatagarbha thought] [Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1974], pp. 346–47). The proper solution remains unclear, though see John P. Keenan, "A Study of the Buddhabhūmyupadeśa: The Doctrinal Development of the Notion of Wisdom in Yogācāra Thought (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1980), pp. 336–54, for some detailed arguments for the MSA's priority, a position which he has now abandoned ("Pure Land Systematics").

[18] See MSA 21:18–19; (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:188); MS 10.10.25–26 (section 10, subsection 10, subsubsections 25–26) (Lamotte, *La somme,* 1:90).

of these as it seems necessary and relevant to do so.[19]

The sixfold method of analyzing Buddhahood was thus of importance in both the preclassical and classical periods of Yogācāra thought, the periods that interest me here. It also provides a convenient structure for an exposition of the topic, and in what follows I shall have a good deal to say about Buddhahood's essential nature and action. I shall have less to say about its cause and result since under these categories come such issues as the practices that need to be engaged in order to reach Buddhahood (important, but not the central concern of this article), and how these practices issue in their desired end. I shall also have relatively little to say about Buddhahood's "function" (*vṛtti*) since this has to do with Buddhahood's internal economy, with the differentiation of function according to the three-body (*trikāya*) doctrine. This also is a fascinating topic, but one which is largely beyond the scope of this paper. The sixth category, Buddhahood's "endowment" (its *yoga*, literally that to which it is yoked or joined) has to do with the specific properties or attributes which any buddha has. In expounding this aspect of Buddhahood, epithet lists once more become significant, and the production of such lists is the other main way in which Yogācāra theorists present Buddhahood.

The list of Buddha's good qualities, which had become standard by the time of Asaṅga (and probably earlier), is usually said to have twenty-one members (though there are other ways of splitting it up which yield a different number).[20] Its locus classicus is an extended verse hymn to the good

[19] The major commentators, in approximate chronological order, are Vasubandhu, author of the MSABh and MSBh, commentaries on the MSA and MS, probably active in the early fifth century C.E.; Sthiramati, author of the MSAVBh, a commentary of the MSA, active in the sixth century C.E.; Śīlabhadra, author of the BBhV, a commentary on the BBhS, perhaps a younger contemporary of Sthiramati and possibly a pupil of Dharmapāla; Asvabhāva (whose name is uncertain since no Sanskrit text by him or mentioning his name has survived; the Tibetan is *Ngo bo nyid med pa*, which might equally well translate *Niḥsvabhava*), author of the MSAṬ and MSU, commentaries on the MSA and MS. Asvabhāva may have been a younger contemporary of Dharmakīrti; he cites the latter's *Nyāyabindu* in the MSU (DT, sems-tsam RI 106a7–106b2), and if we follow Chr. Lindtner's suggested date for Dharmakīrti of 530–600 C.E., this would yield a late-sixth-century date for Asvabhāva. See Lindtner, "A Propos Dharamkīrti—Two Works and a New Date," *Acta Orientalia* 41 (1980): 27–37; "Marginalia to Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya*," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 28 (1984): 149–75. On more general questions of dating see Erich Frauwallner, "Landmarks in the History of Indian Logic," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 5 (1961): 125–48; Kajiyama Yuichi, "Bhāvaviveka, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 12–13 (1968): 193–203; Hakamaya Noriaki, "Sthiramati and Śīlabhadra" *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 25 (1977): 35–37.

[20] The *guṇas* are [1] *apramāṇa* (MSA 21:1); [2] 8 *vimokṣa* (MSA 21:2); [3] 8 *abhibvāyatana* (MSA 21:2); [4] 10 *kṛtsnāyatana* (MSA 21:2) [5] 1 *araṇā* (MSA 21:3); [6] 1 *praṇidhijñāna* (MSA 21:4); [7] 4 *pratisaṃvid* (MSA 21:5); [8] 6 *abhijñā* (MSA 21:6); [9] 32 *lakṣaṇa* (MSA 21:7); [10] 80 *anuvyañjana* (MSA 21:7); [11] 4 *pariuddhi* (MSA 21:8); [12] 10 *bala* (MSA 21:9); [13] 4 *vaiśāradya* (MSA 21:10); [14] 3 *arakṣa* or *ārakṣa* (MSA 231:10); [15] 3 *smṛtyupasthāna* (MSA 21:11); [16] 1 *vāsanasamudghāta* (MSA 21:12); [17] 1 *asaṃmoṣatā* (MSA 21:13); [18] 1 *mahākaruṇā* (MSA 21:14); [19] 18 *āveṇikadharma* (MSA 21:15); [20] 1 *sarvākārajñatā* (MSA 21:16); [21] 1 *pāramitāparipūri* (MSA 21:17). See Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:184–89.

qualities of Buddha found,[21] inter alia, in the final chapter of the MSA and the final chapter of the MS.[22] It is likely that these verses formed a unit of tradition independent of both these texts and earlier than either. The Tibetan canonical collection preserves these verses as an independent work,[23] and a similar list is found in the *pratiṣṭhā* chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* as well as in the AS.[24] It is thus a list of great importance for the tradition; some of its members go back to early Buddhism, but several show a characteristically Yogācāra emphasis. I shall make occasional use of this list of Buddha properties in what follows. A full study of ideas about Buddhahood in classical Indian Yogācāra would, naturally, require a detailed analysis of all these epithets, but I shall not be able to undertake that here.

In addition to both the systematic analysis of Buddhahood through the application of the six categories, and the descriptive analysis preserved in the lists of Buddha's good qualities, the texts are replete with images, similes, and metaphors used to give an impressionistic description of what Buddha is like. Many of these are very suggestive, and I shall draw upon them in what follows, especially upon those preserved in the ninth chapter of the MSA.

BUDDHA'S ESSENTIAL NATURE

The terms used to define and expound what Buddha essentially is cluster around two related but conceptually distinct centers of meaning. The first has to do with the macrocosm, with everything there is just as it is. The key terms here are "Suchness" (*tathatā*) and "pure Dharma Realm" (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*).[25] The second has to do with the microcosm, with

[21] I shall, from this point onwards, drop the use of either a definite or an indefinite article when referring to Buddha, since the texts are not, for the most part, speaking of "the" historical Buddha (i.e., Śākyamuni), nor of any other specific Buddha, but rather of the category in general. I shall also use the neuter rather than a gender-specific pronoun. For a somewhat similar usage see Frank E. Reynolds and Charles Hallisey, "Buddha," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion,* 15 vols., ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 2:219–32.

[22] See Lévi, *Exposé,* 1: 184–89; Lamotte, *La somme,* 1:88–90. Hakamaya Noriaki has translated Asvabhāva's commentary on MSA 21:1–17 into Japanese: "Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāraṭīkā saishū shō wayaku" [A Japanese translation of the final chapter of the MSAṬ], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Kenkyū Kiyō* 41 (1983): 452–417.

[23] Tōhoku catalog no. 2007, attributed to Asaṅga. See Hakamaya Noriaki, "Chos kyi sku la gnas pa'i yon tan la bstod pa to sono kanren bunken" [Documents relating to a hymn of praise to the good qualities based on the Dharmakaya], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Ronshū* 14 (1983): 342–24.

[24] For the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* see Nalinaksha Dutt, ed., *Bodhisattvabhūmiḥ* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1978), pp. 259–82. For the AS see Gokhale (n. 10 above), pp. 37–38; Pradhan (n. 10 above), pp. 94–101; Taita (n. 12 above), pp. 124–33.

[25] Buddhahood is defined in the MSABh on MSA 9:4 as "constituted by the purification of the Dharma Realm" (*tadviśuddihiprabhāvitatvāt,* where the pronoun's referent is *dharmadhātu*).

a certain kind of spontaneous, precise, unmediated awareness, located in an apparently individuated continuum of mental events but universal in scope and free from all obstructions, unhindered by deliberation or volition. The key term here is "*Jñāna*" and its derivatives, a term which, in the contexts relevant to this investigation, spans in semantic range the English words "knowledge" and "awareness."[26]

Buddhist thought has always homologized the macrocosm and the microcosm, the cosmos and the psyche. Altered states of consciousness, usually seen as the products of meditational practices of various kinds, are identified with places, cosmic realms in which a religious virtuoso may be reborn as a direct result of her meditational attainments. It is thus not surprising to find an intimate connection in Yogācāra thought between Buddhahood understood as cosmic fact and Buddhahood understood as particular cognitive condition. The one mirrors the other and is not distinct from it. Suchness and the pure Dharma Realm, terms denoting the totality of things as they are, therefore also denote the "awareness of all modes of appearance" (*sarvākārajñatā*) and "mirror-like awareness" (*ādarśajñāna*), technical terms to which I shall return. This is so since any cognitive event which is genuinely free from obstruction and which is genuinely an instance of direct unmediated awareness makes no separation between itself and its objects. The totality of such events is thus nothing other than the totality of all that there is: Suchness. So Buddhahood in its essential nature is first identified with the macrocosm, with everything there is. It is then identified with the microcosm, with the purified awareness that occurs within a specific mental continuum at a particular time, the time of awakening (*bodhi*) to Buddhahood (*buddhatā*) through a radical transformation (*parāvṛtti*)/*parivṛtti*) of the discriminatory and imaginative basis (*āśraya*) of consciousness, a transformation which permits

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Lambert Schmithausen has devoted a good deal of attention to the meaning of both *prabhāvita* and *viśuddhi* in this compound. He translates it "durch die Reinigung der Soheit konstituert ist" (*Der Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt in der Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī der Yogācārabhūmiḥ* [Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus, 1969], pp. 44, 109–13). Compare Lévi's translation ([n. 14 above] *Exposé*, 2:69) of the same compound: "[la Bouddhaté est produite] par le nettoyage de la Quiddité"; and Lamotte's translation ([n. 15 above] *La somme*, 2:273–74) of *de bzhin nyid rnam par dag pa* (= *tathatāviśuddhi*) as "la purification de la vraie nature." All these translations stress the *process* of purification. It might, however, also be possible to translate *viśuddhi* as a straightforward substantive and to render the compound "[Buddhahood] consists in the purity of Suchness." The emphasis would thus be transferred from the process to the condition. It seems clear that some treatments of *tathatāviśuddhi* treat *viśuddhi* in this way. For example, in the MSU Asvabhāva says that the purity of Suchness is eternal since, if it should change, Suchness could not exist at all (MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 277a2–3). Compare MSU (in DT, sems-tsam RI 286a7) and MSA 21:18a (in Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:188). See also MSA 9:22 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:37), on the sense in which *bodhi* is neither pure (*śuddha*) nor impure (*aśuddha*).

[26] Karl Potter ("Does Indian Epistemology Concern Justified True Belief?" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12 [1984]: 307–27) provides some useful discussion of this in purely epistemological contexts.

direct undiscriminating awareness (*nirvikalpajñāna*) to occur. Buddhahood is thus identical with everything, as the MSA explicitly says,[27] and this is understood to mean that Buddhahood is the awareness of everything, as the MSA also says.[28] This in turn makes sense if and only if there is no ontological distinction between knowledge and its objects.

The essential nature of pure Dharma Realm (here a synonym for Buddha) is defined, in the first of the four verses that apply the abovementioned sixfold analysis to that concept, in the following manner:

It is defined by the purification of the Suchness of all things from the two obstacles.
It is defined by imperishable mastery over the awareness of things and the awareness which has that as its object.[29]

This verse makes the connection between the cosmic and the psychological quite clear: Buddha is both "the purification of the Suchness of all things" (cosmic dimension) and "awareness of things and . . . awareness which has that as its object" (psychological dimension). This reference of two kinds of awareness (*vastujñāna* and *tadālambajñāna*) as constitutive of Buddhahood introduces an important Yogācāra theme: the distinction between the awareness which occurs at the moment of awakening to Buddhahood, and the awareness which makes it possible for Buddha to function in the world after this awakening has occurred. Sthiramati and Asvabhāva, in their comments upon this verse as it occurs in the MSA, identify "awareness of things" with "subsequently attained awareness" (*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*), a kind of awareness which is variegated in that it has a rich and complex phenomenological content but still does not discriminate or imaginatively construct any differentiation between subject and object. The "object" of this kind of awareness, insofar as it can be said to have one that is other than its occurrence, is simply the appearance of things as they really are—that is, as radically interdependent (*paratantra*) one upon another.[30] The commentators then interpret the "awareness which has that as its object" as an awareness turned directly towards Dharma Realm, free from all obstacles (*āvaraṇa*) and constructive imagin-

[27] Lévi, *Exposé,* 1:34.

[28] See the discussion of *buddhatā* as *sarvākārajñatā* in MSA 9:1–3 and MSABh thereto (Lévi, *Exposé,* 1:33–34).

[29] MSA 9:56 (Lévi, *Exposé,* 1:44).

[30] MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 72b5–6; MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 134a2–4. Both Sthiramati and Asvabhāva mention the "transformation of the basis of the depravities" in this context (*dausthulyāśrayaparāvṛtti = ngan len gyi gnas yongs su gyur pa*); there is relevant material on this in the *Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun.* See Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Hiuan Tsang* (Paris: Geuthner, 1928–48), pp. 610–11, 665–66. The meaning is that the "depravities" (which are usually said to be twenty-four in number [AS, DT, sems-tsam RI 99b7-100a3; Pradhan, p. 76; Tatia, pp. 92–93]) are removed from the *ālayavijñāna* and pure dharmas are added thereto. See also MS 10.3.1 (Lamotte, *La somme,* 1:84).

ings.[31] It is this awareness which, traditionally in Yogācāra, is called simply *nirvikalpajñāna,* an awareness free from all constructed imaginings. It is usually described apophatically;[32] when anything positive is said about it, it is often that it consists in the concentration of the practitioner's mind upon Suchness, the real nature of all things, without any conceptual or verbal proliferation (*prapañca*) of any kind and without any active application (*abhisamskr–*) of the mind to any object.[33] Such an awareness, it would seem, is without intentional objects and without any of the language-based activities of classification and categorization that are so important to, indeed constitutive of, everyday awareness.

Partakers of Buddhahood obviously continue to function in the world after becoming Buddha. Buddha continues to act as if experiencing the variegated world in much the same way that I do: it responds to sensory input, appears to initiate actions, preaches sermons and so forth. And yet Buddha cannot be experiencing the variegated world in every respect as I do since it does not engage in the imaginative construction of a lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) through the categories of "person" and "thing," whereas imaginative construction of just these categories colors, phenomenologically, all of my experience.[34] It is subsequently attained awareness that enables Buddha to function in the world without constructing these categories, without allowing the least tincture of imagination in its awareness. Asaṅga, in the MS, uses some images which clarify the relationship between that fundamental unconstructed awareness (*maulanirvikalpajñāna*) whose object is simply pure Dharma Realm, and the subsequently attained awareness which follows it.[35] The former, he says, is like

[31] MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 72b6–7; MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 134b4–7. Here both commentators mention the "transformation of the basis of the path" (*margāśrayaparāvṛtti = lam gyi gnas yongs su gyur pa*). On this, see La Vallée Poussin, p. 665; Hakamaya, "The Realm of Enlightment in Vijñaptimātratā: The Formulation of the 'Four Kinds of Pure Dharmas,'" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 3 (1980): 34, n. 67, "Sanshu Tenne Kō," [Research on the threefold *Āśraya-parivṛtti*] *Bukkyōgaku* 2 (1976): 57–58. Connections can be made here with the third of the four purities (*mārgavyavādana*) treated in the second chapter of the MS.

[32] As, e.g., in the MS (in Lamotte, *La somme,* 2:283–85) and the AS (DT, sems-tsam RI 117a4–5; Pradhan, p. 102).

[33] On this see ASBh (Tatia, p. 139), and Hakamaya, "Yuishiki bunken ni okeru mufunbetsushi" [*Nirvikalpajñāna* according to *Vijñaptimātra* literature], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Kenkyū Kiyō* 43 (1985): 252–215. Hakamaya's article discusses this text from the ASBh and several other key discussions of *nirvikalpajñāna.*

[34] For a classic statement of the importance of freedom from experience colored by the concepts of *pudgala* and *dharma,* see the opening sentences of the *Triṃśikābhāṣyam* (Sylvain Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: Deux traités de Vasubandhu* [Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925], p. 15). (Hereafter referred to as *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*).

[35] Asaṅga actually distinguishes three kinds of *nirvikalpajñāna:* preparatory (*prāyogika*), fundamental (*maula*), and subsequently attained (*pṛṣṭhalabdha*). The distinctions between the first two are not of great importance for the purposes of this study. See MS, 8.15–16 (Lamotte, *La somme,* 2:243).

a dumb person who finds something she has been looking for; the latter is like that person with the faculty of speech. Communication is not possible in the former condition; it becomes possible in the latter. Alternatively, fundamental unconstructed awareness is like a person with his eyes shut; subsequently attained awareness is like that person with opened eyes. And, finally, fundamental unconstructed awareness is like empty space, while subsequently attained awareness is like that space filled with colors and forms.[36]

Subsequently attained awareness, then, is that which makes possible all of Buddha's prescribed actions aiming at the salvation of others; it makes, above all else, discourse and communication possible, the sine qua non of everything else. Both kinds of awareness are free from improper imaginative construction, but fundamental unconstructed awareness appears also to be empty of all phenomenological content, while subsequently attained awareness is rich and variegated in content even though none of the "objects" that appear in it do so as substantive and independent existents. Rather, subsequently attained awareness consists in a series of causally connected images of representations (*vijñapti*), none of which is characterized phenomenologically by a dualistic subject-object structure.

Śīlabhadra, in his comments upon the verse cited above, agrees in substance with what Asvabhāva and Sthiramati say in their commentaries upon the MSA. He adds, though, the term "mirror-like awareness" (*ādarśajñāna*) as a label for both kinds of awareness mentioned in the verse.[37] He says, as do Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, that the proper object of mirror-like awareness is things experienced in their aspect of radical interdependence; but he also stresses that, because mirror-like awareness is coextensive with everything that exists (with, as he puts it, the limits of *saṃsāra*), and because all of its awareness is direct and unmediated, one must also say that its object is Dharma Realm.[38] Śīlabhadra's use of the term "mirror-like awareness" here thus brings together fundamental unconstructed awareness and subsequently attained awareness and shows that they are not, finally, distinct. The mirror of mirror-like awareness reflects pure Dharma Realm when empty of content and the multitude of interdependent representations or images when full of content.

Mirror-like awareness in turn is identical with the "awareness of all

[36] See MS 8.16 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:245). Compare MSAṬ on MSA 9:62 (DT, sems-tsam BI 73b4–5) on the five aspects of *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*. At least some Yogācāra thinkers clearly felt that subsequently attained awareness must be *savikalpa*, as some of these images suggest.

[37] In the use of mirror imagery in this and similar contexts see Paul Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel," *Sinologica* 1/2 (1947): 112–37; Alex Wayman, "The Mirror-like Knowledge in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature," *Asiatische Studien* 25 (1971): 353–63; "The Mirror as a Pan-Buddhist Metaphor-Simile," *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 264–81.

[38] Nishio (n. 14 above), 1:119–20.

modes of appearance" (*sarvākārajñatā*).[39] This is a special kind of omniscience available only to Buddha; its object is all the "modes of appearance" (*ākāra*) there are. "Modes of appearance" is a technical term in Buddhist epistemology, psychology, and theory of perception. Briefly, it stands for something like a particular mental event's phenomenological content, the way in which that event appears to its subject. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* says that the mode of appearance belonging to any mental event is simply the mode under which that event grasps its object.[40] So, for example, when I have the (perceptual) mental event of apprehending a maple tree visible from my study window, that mental event will have the complex mode of appearance "appearing maple-tree-in-the-autumn-ly" (to borrow Chisholmian terminology). Such a complex mode of appearance could, of course, be further analyzed, for example, into the modes of appearance "appearing red-and-yellow-leaf-ly" and so forth. It is important to realize that, both for Buddhist cognitive theory and for common sense, the occurrence and kind of a specific mode of appearance is not determined solely by the presence and kind of an object (*artha* or *viṣaya*), but also by the presence and condition of the subject for whom the appearance occurs. When I see a maple tree and when Buddha sees one, or rather when Buddha's mirror-like awareness reflects one, the phenomenology of the two experiences differs dramatically. Mine is dualistic: the maple tree appears to me as if it were an external object, ontologically other than me, its perceiver. Further, my awareness of myself as an enduring, perceiving subject will also be an important element in the phenomenology of my experience. None of this is so for Buddha's unconstructed awareness. This is illustrated by the following extract from the *Madhyāntavibhagabhāṣyam:* "[An object] appears dualistically, [split

[39] The witness of classical Yogācāra texts as to the use of *ādarśajñāna* and *sarvākārajñāna* to refer to *both* fundamental *nirvikalpajñāna* and *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* is not entirely unambiguous. The MSABh, e.g., in commenting upon MSA 9:68, says that *ādarśajñāna* is *anākāratva* without modes of appearance. This, if taken seriously, suggests that *ādarśajñāna* can be identified only with *maulanirvikalpajñāna*. The commentators have a good deal to say about this (MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 139a4 ff.; MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 74a5–74b1; cf. BBhS, Nishio, 1:9). I cannot explore the issue further here, although I do so in another work on *sarvākārajñatā* in the *Indo-Iranian Journal* (1990), in press.

[40] See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* on *Abhidharmakośakārikā* 7.13 (Dwārikādās Śāstrī, ed., *Abhidharmakośa and Bhāṣya of ācārya Vasubandhu with Sphūṭārthā commentary of ācārya Yaśomitra* [Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1981], p. 1062). The *bhāṣya* on *Abhidharmakośakārikā* 2:34bc discusses the sense in which three important words for the mental (*citta, manas, vijñāna*) all have the same sense and referent (*eko'rthaḥ*). It explains that all mental events have the same basic characteristics and links the fact that they "possess an object" (*sālambana*) with the fact that they "have an *ākāra*," both essential to any member of the class-category mental event (Śāstrī, *Abhidharmakośa*, pp. 208–9). This necessary coexistence of *ālamabana* and *ākāra* is also made clear by Asvabhāva in the MSU (DT, sems-tsam RI 267b2). Compare also the denial in the *Triṃśikabhāṣyam* that consciousness without *ākāra* and *ālambana* is possible (Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, p. 19).

into] subject and object, because it arises [in awareness] with that mode of appearance (*ākāra*). Seeing that [the object] does not exist in the way that it appears [i.e., dualistically] is what not being under a misapprehension about it means."[41] "Not being under a misapprehension about" objects of experience is a condition Buddha never leaves. The phenomenology of its experience is not tainted by improper imagination or constructive activity, and the scope of its awareness is universal, as the use of the modifier "all" in the phrase "the awareness of all modes of appearance" suggests.

There are real and complex problems involved in sorting out exactly what is meant by saying that Buddha is aware of *all* modes of appearance. If modes of appearance occur to normal experiences in temporal sequence, and if temporality is constituted by the causal process which links these modes of appearance into sequence (as I think Yogācāra theorists would have to assert), then it would seem that *sarvākārajñatā* must be an atemporal cognitive event. This is so because its phenomenological content is not characterized by causal succession. Rather, it must be the case that the entire interdependent web of representations (which constitutes Suchness) is changelessly present in a single atemporal event. On this reading, the category of Buddhahood denotes the most radical imaginable homologization of the microcosm to the macrocosm. The individuated continuum of mental events which constitutes a "person" prior to the attainment of Buddhahood (the microcosm) ceases to be individuated and becomes what it really is: that "thingness of all things" (*sarvadharmānāṃ dharmatā*) which is the macrocosm. This in turn explains why Buddha is one and undifferentiated when considered as it is in its Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*), and also why this Dharma Body must be regarded as eternally the same, not subject to any kind of change.[42]

This view of Buddha's essential nature as the changeless totality of a web of interconnected and interdependent representations is often expressed in these texts through the language of paradox. This appears to be, at least in part, because of a desire to avoid imputations of the heresy of "eternalism" (*śāsvatavāda*), a basic Buddhist error. Buddha, understood as the changeless, eternal, pure Dharma Realm, does not exist eternally as some specific existent might exist. When the texts say (as they frequently do) that, given contradictory pairs of predicates such as "existence"

[41] *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣyam* on *Madhyāntavibhāga* 5:15. See R.C. Pandeya, *Madhyānta-Vibhāga-Śāstra: Containing the Kārikā-s of Maitreya, Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu and Ṭīkā by Sthiramati* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 162.

[42] The tenth chapter of the MS (Lamotte, *La somme,* 1:98) contains a section on the eternality (*nityatā*) of the *dharmakāya* in which this matter is discussed in detail. See MSBh, DT, sems-tsam RI 231b7–232a5; MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 295a3–295b2.

(*bhāva*) and "nonexistence" (*abhāva*), neither applies to Buddha,[43] the intention is not to reject the principle of noncontradiction in favor of some "mystical" transcendence of opposites.[44] Rather, the intention is to show that the kind of existence properly to be predicated of Buddha is not the kind that be predicated of any other existent. The "method of indeterminacy" (*avyākṛtanaya*) to be applied to such questions frequently means, in the hands of the Yogācāra theorists, a use of the theory of the three aspects (*trisvabhāva*) under which experience may occur.[45] So, in his comments upon MSA 9.24, in which the predication of both existence and nonexistence is denied in the case of Buddhahood, Sthiramati explains that the kind of existence denied is that which belongs to constructed or imaginary (*parikalpita*) entities, while that which is affirmed is that which belongs to the perfected (*pariniṣpanna*) aspect of experience which is, in the end, identical with Suchness.[46]

The overall picture of Buddha's essential nature is then the following: awakening (*bodhi*) can occur in a specific mental continuum at a particular moment. When this happens, unconstructed awareness results; this is a moment of pure empty consciousness in which the mirror of awareness reflects nothing.[47] It is followed—perhaps immediately—by subsequently attained awareness, which consists in a seamless interconnected web of representations or images. This condition does not change. It is a complex atemporal event, characterized by the complete absence of dualistic awareness; it is nonverbal and nonconceptual, and since no change occurs therein, no volition belongs to this condition. How, given that this is what Buddha essentially is, can Buddha act for the benefit of sentient beings? To this I now turn.

[43] For example, MSA 9:2ab (Lévi [n. 14 above], *Exposé*, 1:38). For denials of other matched pairs of contradictory predicates see MS 10.3a (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:84); MS 10.33 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 1:96); cf. MSA 6:1 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:22) on the proper definition of *paramārtha*.

[44] On this see J. F. Staal, "Negation and the Law of Contradiction in Indian Thought: A Comparative Study," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 25 (1962): 52–71; Roy W. Perrett, "Self-Refutation in Indian Philosophy," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12 (1984): 237–63.

[45] MSA 9.24–25 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:38).

[46] MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 130a3–5.

[47] Nishitani Keiji, in describing the process of "self-reflection" integral to the practice of Zen, uses the process of examining one's face in a mirror as an extended metaphor for what goes on when awakening occurs. One progresses, he says, from a disinterested examination of one's face as an object; thence to a nondualistic awareness that the eyes looking and those being looked at are not different from each other; finally to a situation which "is comparable to two mirrors mutually reflecting one another with nothing in between to produce an image" (Nishitani, "The Standpoint of Zen," *Eastern Buddhist* 17 [1984]: 5–6). Nishitani captures in this piece a good deal of what our texts are talking about, even though there is little evidence in his works that he was familiar with Indian Yogācāra literature.

BUDDHA'S ACTION

The principle conceptual problem involved in explaining how Buddha acts concerns the proper relation between the temporal and the atemporal, the changing and the changeless. With the temporal goes volition (the free decision to undertake a particular course of action at a particular time), deliberation (the process of choice between alternative possible courses of action), responsiveness to changing circumstances, and, finally, the temporally located event of action itself. With the atemporal goes the absence of all this. And if, as I have suggested, Buddha is seen by the Yogācāra tradition as essentially changeless and so atemporal, and as not being capable of spatial location,[48] the problem of accounting for its apparent action in time and space becomes pressing.

The first half of the third of the four verses applying the sixfold analysis to Buddhahood (mentioned above) describes its action (*karman*) in the following terms: "Its action consists in proper methods, using magical transformations of body, speech, and mind."[49] Of key importance here is the concept of "proper methods" (*upāya*), a concept further specified by the phrase "magical transformations (*nirmāṇa*) of body, speech, and mind." All the commentators on this verse give numerous examples of such magical transformations. Buddha might, for example, transform its body to look like that of Indra or Brahma, or it might transform the minds of fools so that they are able to understand Buddhist teaching or even to teach it themselves.[50] Śīlabhadra is the most systematic and detailed in his exposition of these magical transformations. He divides the transformations of body and speech into three kinds—those transformations that pertain to oneself, those that pertain to others, and those that do not pertain to any person but instead use some other object as their basis.[51] In the case of

[48] See MSA 9:15 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:36) on Buddhahood's omnipresence (*sarvagatatva*). Here Buddhahood is likened to space, and the MSABh comments that this is because of its perfection in commitment towards all sentient beings. Asvabhāva (MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 67b7–68a1) comments that Buddha's omnipresence results from the identity of all beings with itself—which is just what one would expect given the delineation of Buddha's essence provided above. See also MSAṬ (DT, sems-tsam BI 69a6–69b1) on the absence of distinction among Buddhas (commenting on MSA 9:26).

[49] MSA 9:58a (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:44). Compare Nishio (n. 14 above), 1:23.

[50] MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 73a4–5; MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 134b6–135a7; Nishio, 1:123–24.

[51] Asvabhāva does not use this method of classifying transformations. Sthiramati mentions the first two (*svātmasaṃbaddhanirmāṇa* and *parātmasaṃbaddhanirmāṇa*), but not the third. Śīlabhadra applies both of these, together with the category *niḥsaṃbaddhanirmāṇa*, to *kāyanirmāṇa* and *vāknirmāṇa*, but only the first two to *cittanirmāṇa*. This, presumably, is because to fill the third category one needs something other than a sentient being to transform, and there is no instance of a mind which does not belong to a sentient being of some kind. There are, of course, plenty of physical objects and vibrating sound producers which are not connected with any sentient being.

magical transformations of the body, an example of the first kind is the transformation of one's own body into that of a wheel-rolling monarch (*cakravartin*); an example of the second kind is the transformation of a demon's body into a Buddha's for the purpose of encouraging others to act correctly; and an example of the third kind is the transformation of plain earth into a radiant Buddha field. The key point is that, according to the half-verse quoted, Buddha's action simply consists in magical transformations of these kinds and that these transformations are its *upāya*, its "proper method." They occur entirely in accordance with the needs of as-yet-unawakened sentient beings.

The exposition given so far makes it sound as though the magical transformations are volitional: that Buddha looks around at the needs of sentient beings and decides to meet those needs at particular times and in particular places by magically transforming itself. Given the picture presented earlier of what Buddha essentially is, this cannot be the correct interpretation, and there is much in the texts to suggest that it is not. First, the use of the word *nirmāṇa* in the verse cited indicates that these transformations are not real. Their occurrence does not constitute any real modification in Buddha, much less any temporally indexed volitions occurring therein. The necessary and sufficient conditions for the occurrence of any one of these transformations are not located in Buddha but in the (apparently) changing conditions of sentient beings. The way in which Buddha's soteriological actions appear (the kind and apparent spatiotemporal location of its magical transformations) is thus determined solely by the condition of the recipients of these (apparent) transformations. This is suggested, for example, by the simile (*upamā*) of the moon and the broken waterpots:

> Just as the moon's image is not visible in a broken waterpot,
> So Buddha's image is not visible among defective beings.[52]

Sthiramati's comments make explicit what is intended here:[53] a particular continuum of mental events, defined by such things as anger and desire and the actions that are their concomitants, is likened to a broken waterpot. The continuum in question is "defective" in that it does not perceive that it is itself essentially the same as Buddha, and it is this misperception, coupled with the relevant defilements, that causes Buddha's proper image not to appear in it.[54] Naturally, if a perception of

[52] MSA 9:16 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:36).
[53] MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 116b5–117a2.
[54] For the discussion of a similar image, see MS 10.28.7 (Lamotte [n. 15 above], *La somme*, 1:91); MSBh, DT, sems-tsam RI 183b2–5; MSU DT, sems-tsam RI 288a3–6.

itself as essentially identical with Buddha were to occur in the continuum in question, this would constitute awakening. The continuum in question would become Buddha. But this is not dependent in any way upon anything that Buddha does.

The nonvolitional nature of Buddha's apparent actions for the benefit of sentient beings is further clarified in the MSA:

> Buddhas do not say "I have brought this one to maturity" or "This embodied being should be brought to maturity" or "I am now bringing this one to maturity."
> Instead, creatures approach maturity without effort.[55]

Sthiramati explains that the verse shows Buddha to be without any intention or calculation in regard to bringing beings to maturity. It is not that at one time Buddha shows no concern for a particular being and then later decides to help that being on towards realizing its Buddhahood. Buddha, in apparently acting for the benefit of other things, does so without moving from the pure Dharma Realm with which it (in its pure Dharma Body) is identical.[56]

The similes used to impressionistically describe the activity of Buddha, in the MSA and elsewhere, also stress this effortless (*ayatna*) and spontaneous (*anābhoga*) action.[57] It is likened, among many other things, to the sun's effortless ripening of a field of grain,[58] to a gong from which sound comes without anyone striking it,[59] and to a radiant jewel which gives out its light naturally, spontaneously, and effortlessly.[60] The magical transformations in which Buddha's actions consist are therefore not indicative of any changes or volitions in Buddha. They are produced solely by the (ultimately illusory) changes in the defiled and obstructed condition of sentient beings and so belong to the realm of the imaginary (*parikalpita*). Buddha actually, changelessly, does one and the same thing without variation; variation in Buddha's action is apparent only from the perspective of the recipients of such actions.[61] A final illustration of this point:

55 MSA 9:52ac (Lévi [n. 14 above], *Exposé*, 1:43). There is a textual problem here. Both Lévi and Bagchi [n. 16 above] read *cāprapācyo* in the second *pāda*, but I follow the Tibetan (*rab tu smin bya*) in rejecting the negative.

56 MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 131b4–6. See also MSA 9:51 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:43); MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 72a3–4.

57 The term *ayatna* is used in MSA 9:53a and glossed with *anabhisaṃskāra* in the MSABh (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:43). Compare MSA 9:20–21 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:37); *Ratnagotravibhāga*, chap. 4. E. H. Johnston, ed., *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyāuoltaratantraśāstra* (Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1950), p. 99; MSA 9:4 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:33).

58 MSA 9:52 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:44).

59 MSA 9:18 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:37); MS 8.17 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:245–46); *Ratnagotravibhāga* 4:15 (Johnston, *Ratnogatravibhāga*, 99).

60 MSA 9:3 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:33); MS 8.17 (Lamotte, *La somme*, 2:245–246).

61 MSA 9:27–35 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:38–39).

Just as when one ray is emitted all rays are emitted
In the case of the sun, so also in the case of the emission of
Buddha's awareness.[62]

The point of this verse is that Buddha's awareness (*jñāna*) cannot be chopped up, divided, or located in one place or time over against another. Wherever and whenever any of it is, all of it is, identically. And since, as I have suggested, Buddha's awareness is coextensive with everything that exists, this is not surprising. The commentaries to this verse make the point abundantly clear: whenever and wherever Buddha acts, it acts fully, completely, and identically.[63]

Technically, Buddha's actions are made possible by a special apparent modification of that mirror-like awareness in which it essentially consists. This modification is given the label "awareness which does what needs to be done" (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*).[64] This apparent modification of Buddha's changeless mirror-like awareness is produced by the needs of sentient beings (*sarvasattvārthakr–*); it does not, of course, reflect any real change in that awareness which constitutes Buddha, just as the magical transformations in and through which Buddha seems to act are not alterations of Buddha's single, unique, atemporal act. The awareness which does what needs to be done functions through its connection with Buddha's body of magical transformation—it is this body which allows the changelessly shining moon of Buddha's Dharma Body to appear reflected in various ways in the water of the variously shattered, cracked, and disturbed waterpots that are sentient beings.[65]

The radical singularity and undifferentiatedness of Buddha's actions is given trenchant expression by Asaṅga in the MS. There, the activity (*karman*) of the "Dharma Realm of Buddhas" (*buddhānāṃ dharmadhātuḥ*) is divided into five categories, all of which can be subsumed under the general heading of "proper method" (*upāya*). It is this proper method which causes Buddha's action to appear differently at different times,

[62] MSA 9:31 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:39).

[63] The MSABh explicitly says that all of Buddha's awareness functions or gets under way (*pravṛtti*) at a single moment (*ekakāle*). See also MSAṬ, DT, sems-tsam BI 69b4–6.

[64] Śīlabhadra makes the connection between Buddha's *karman* and its *kṛtyānuṣṭhanajñāna* explicit in his comments upon the verses that apply the sixfold analysis to Buddhahood (Nishio [n. 14 above], 1:123–24). It is one of the interesting features of Śīlabhadra's comments on these verses that he attempts to harmonize and bring together Buddha's four knowledges with the sixfold analysis. None of the other commentators on these verses attempt this. For more on the *kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna* see MSA 9:74–75 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:47).

[65] Sthiramati makes the connection between *kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna* and *nirmāṇa* quite clear in his comments on MSA 9:74–75. See MSAVBh, DT, sems-tsam MI 142a3–142b5. Compare MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 278a6.

even though in reality it is always the same. Asaṅga explains why this is in the following verse:[66]

Actions in the world are differentiated according to differences in cause, basis, what needs to be done, aspiration, and application.
Since there are no such differences for the protectors of the world, [their actions] are also [not differentiated].[67]

Both Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva give detailed explanations of this verse;[68] they both stress that since none of the usual criteria by which one action is differentiated from another apply in the case of Buddha, and since all Buddha's actions are spontaneous (*anābhoga*) and effortless (*ayatna*), it therefore follows that there can be no differentiation of one Buddha's actions from another, much less an individuation of one particular action from another.

The conceptual problem with which this section began, that of relating an apparently atemporal, changeless Buddha to a set of temporal and (apparently) changing sentient beings and their needs, is thus solved by denying that there is such a relation. Buddha does not act in time; Suchness is always (atemporally) pure, and so there really are no impurities requiring removal. The apparent temporal appearances of Buddha in its bodies of magical transformation are just that—apparent and magical. The objects of such magical transformations (sentient beings and their needs) are also apparent, belonging to the imagined (*parikalpita*) realm of *māyā*, of illusion and change. The reality is that all beings are Buddhas-in-embryo and so do not need saving.

It may perhaps be doubted whether this is an altogether satisfactory resolution of the issue, even on the purely conceptual level. Sufficient connection between the temporal and the atemporal must be allowed to permit the (apparent) defilement of the (really) pure Dharma Realm to occur, as well as to allow the (apparent) removal of these defilements at the moment of awakening. In so far as the Yogācāra theorists explain how this connection operates, they do so by using the three-aspect theory, a theory which classifies experience into three possible modalities.[69] The process of imaginary construction which constitutes the imagined aspect of experience (*parikalpitasvabhāva*) is seen as beginningless and fundamentally

[66] That *buddhānāṃ dharmadhātuḥ* is a periphrasis for *dharmakāya* is made clear by both Vasubandhu (MSBh, DT, sems-tsam RI 186b1–2) and Asvabhāva (MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 292a1).

[67] MS 10.31 (Lamotte, *La somme,* 1:95).

[68] MSBh, DT, sems-tsam RI 186b3–187a1; MSU, DT, sems-tsam RI 292a7–292b6.

[69] For a concise analysis of the *trisvabhāva* theory see my own *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986), pp. 80–96; Nagao Gadjin, "The Buddhist World-View as Elucidated in the Three-Nature Theory and Its Similes," *Eastern Buddhist* 16 (1983): 1–18.

unreal,[70] and the question of the origin of that "concern with what does not exist,"[71] which marks the *parikalpita*, is, when asked, answered only with a series of similes in which it is likened to various kinds of magical illusion (*māyā*).[72] Among these magical illusions are counted the "remedial practices" (*dharmāḥ prātipākṣikāḥ*) of Buddha—a category that includes all Buddha's actions for the benefit of sentient beings.[73] The operation of the constructive imagination is thus a fundamentally unreal process, a process that carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. These seeds mature and bear fruit only at the moment of fundamental transformation, when Suchness appears as it really is. Even this transformation, though, really transforms nothing; like one magical man destroying another,[74] the unreal is removed by the unreal. The real (atemporal) thus does not contact the unreal (the atemporal).

This position was often taken by Madhyamaka critics of Yogācāra to reveal a fundamental weakness in the Yogācāra conceptual scheme. The dilemma is this: mirror-like awareness is, according to Yogācāra theory, genuinely nondualistic; either it has no connection of any kind with the dualism of ordinary cognition, in which case it is impossible to account for the occurrence of such dualism, or it does have such a connection, in which case one cannot assert that mirror-like awareness is genuinely nondualistic.[75] Whether the objection can be answered depends on one's reading of the *trisabhāva* theory in all its ramifications, a complex issue that goes far beyond the scope of this article. Here I can only note the difficulty.

[70] See MSA 11.38-39 (Lévi [n. 14 above], *Exposé*, 1:64) for a discussion of *parikalpita* in these terms. It should be noted that the presentation of the *trisvabhāva* theory given in the eleventh chapter of the MSA is interestingly different in its details from the "classical" theory as found in the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* and Madhyāntavibhāga.

[71] MSA 11:14d (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:58).

[72] Fifteen verses are devoted to these similes in MSA 11:15–29 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:59–62).

[73] MSA 11:28–29 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:61–62).

[74] This image occurs frequently in Indian Buddhist texts. See, inter alia, MSA 11:29 (Lévi, *Exposé*, 1:62); *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, in E. H. Johnston and Arnold Kunst, eds., "The *Vigrahavyāvartanī* of Nāgārjuna," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 9 (1948): 123.

[75] Such criticisms are suggested by Bhāvaviveka in the *Madhyamakhṛdayakārikā*, chap. 5; in the *Prajñāpradīpa (nirvaṇaparīkṣā)*; and in the *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa*, chap. 4. See Chr. Lindtner, "Bhavya's Critique of Yogācāra in the *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa*, Chapter IV," in *Buddhist Logic and Epistemology: Studies in the Buddhist Analysis of Inference and Language*, ed. Bimal Krishna Matilal and Robert D. Evans (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986), chap. 4, pp. 239–63, "Materials for the Study of Bhavya," in *Kalyāṇamitrārāgaṇam: Essays in Honour of Nils Simonsson*, ed. Eivind Kahrs (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1986), pp. 179–202. A more developed critique is offered by Jñānagarbha in the *Satyadvayavibhaṅgakārikā* and *vṛtti*, verses 23–24. See Malcolm David Eckel, *Jñānagarbha's Commentary on the Distinction between the Two Truths: An Eighth Century Handbook of Madhyamaka Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 90–92, 141.

MAXIMAL GREATNESS: BUDDHA AND GOD CONTRASTED

To return to the terminology and goals set forth at the beginning of this study: what has been learned about the properties regarded as self-evidently great-making (and thus self-evidently to be predicated of Buddha) by the Yogācāra tradition? Using the language of the texts, something like the following list seems appropriate: first, purity (*viśuddhi*, applied universally as *dharmādhatuviśuddhi*); second, omnipresence (*sarvagatatva*); third, universal awareness (*jñāna*, especially *ādarśajñāna* and *sarvākārajñāna*); fourth, identity with everything that exists, and non-existence as a separable entity (*advayalakṣaṇa* as interpreted through the *trisvabhāva* system); fifth, absence of volition, decision, effort, choice (*anābhogatva, ayatna*, especially *ekatva* and *apratiprasrabdhatva* as applied to Buddha's *karman*). More freely stated: the texts studied here regard as great-making properties those that reduce individuality and all that goes with it, including especially agency, temporality, and volition. Such properties reduce the sense of separateness from other (apparent) entities, the sense of existence in time, and the need for (and ability to) make free decisions, to react to (apparently) changing stimuli. Increased is the sense of unity, the scope of awareness (which ideally becomes coextensive with everything that exists), and freedom from changing emotional states. Presupposing a certain metaphysic, discussed already in sufficient detail, this means in effect that the texts regard freedom from intellectual error as the basic great-making property: Buddha does not experience itself as an agent (and is not an agent) because there are, ultimately, no agents. Buddha has no volition because, ultimately, the (apparent) occurrence of volitions belongs only to the unreal, imagined (*parikalpita*) realm. Buddha's awareness (*jñāna*) is universal in scope because there is nothing (no obstacles, neither *kleśa-* nor *jñeyāvaraṇa*) to prevent it from functioning as it should, which is to be nondualistically directly aware of everything. Such awareness is seen by the tradition as simply identical with everything there is just as it is—with Suchness, pure Dharma Realm, and the perfected aspect of experience (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*). Further, Buddha exists atemporally and has no volitions just because both time and that which has temporal location are constituted by the causal process, and the causal process is itself a part of the imagined realm and thus has no reality.

All that has been said about Buddha moves at a high level of generality; refinement and precision both could and should be added to the picture. This could be done both by differentiating more carefully than I have done here among the different strands and emphases present in preclassical and classical Yogācāra and by formulating more precisely and criticizing more thoroughly some of the conceptual connections present on and beneath the surface of the texts. But these are tasks for further

research, and for the purposes of this study there are virtues in keeping things on a fairly abstract and general level. Not least among these virtues is that I want to conclude this study with some comparative remarks. My object of comparison here will be the sketch of Christian theism given by Thomas V. Morris, a Christian philosophical theologian, in what I judge to be a methodologically important and very suggestive piece.[76] In this piece, Morris sets forth some of the terminology used in this study ("great-making properties," "maximal greatness," and so forth) and gives a brief outline of those great-making properties which he thinks "would accord with the intuitions of most perfect being theologians."[77] The outline follows; the great-making properties are listed in ascending order of greatness:

God is conceived of as: (1) conscious (a minded being capable of thought and awareness); (2) a conscious agent (capable of free action); (3) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent; (4) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent with significant knowledge; (5) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent with significant knowledge and power; (6) a thoroughly benevolent conscious agent with unlimited knowledge and power who is the creative source of all else; (7) a thoroughly benevolent, necessarily existent conscious agent with unlimited knowledge and power who is the ontologically independent creative source of all else.[78]

Morris's hope that most perfect being theologians (those whose governing motive in thinking about God is to ascribe to him all and only those properties taken to be great-making and to ascribe them in the greatest possible degree consonant with coherence) will find their intuitions in accord with his sketch is unlikely to be fulfilled, even if attention is restricted to theologians shaped by the Christian tradition. Intuitions simply vary too much and are too difficult to ground, as Wainwright has already pointed out.[79] And if we include our Buddhist Yogācāra theorists under this rubric, then Morris's hope is quite certain to be disappointed. His sketch, like all such sketches, represents a partial and tendentious abstraction from the widely varied traditions of thought about God found in the Christian tradition.[80] I choose it because its *Tendenz* is one with which I am very much in sympathy: if it is understood as a prescriptive reading of the Christian tradition of the form "this is what Christians should believe

[76] See Morris (n. 8 above).
[77] Ibid., p. 26.
[78] Ibid. Compare the delineation of classical Christian theism given by Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 2.
[79] Wainwright (n. 8 above).
[80] The tradition of process theology that has grown out of Whitehead's thought, e.g., although it can certainly be understood as an instance of perfect being theology in Morris's sense, equally obviously has significantly different intuitions about which properties are great-making. See, e.g., Charles Hartshorne, "Six Theistic Proofs," *Monist* 54 (1970): 159–80.

about God if they interpret their tradition aright," then it seems to me that its prescriptions are, in essentials, correct (though I cannot, of course, argue for this here). But even leaving aside this question of *Tendenz*, Morris's sketch operates at just about the right level of generality for my comparative purposes and makes the key points of metaphysical disagreement between (this reading of) Christian theism and the (Yogācāra) Buddhist view of Buddhahood very clear.

The first and most obvious point of disagreement as to which properties should properly be seen as great-making has to do with the question of free agency. Suppose we understand the concept of free agency to include the idea that there is something other than the agent to be acted upon; that actions are spatiotemporally located; and that, in the case of any particular action of a given free agent, the action could have been other than it was. Something like this may be what Morris has in mind in his ascription to God of the great-making properties of freedom and agency (elements 1 and 2 in his list). There are, of course, other and more recherché concepts of agency used by Christian theologians in thinking about God's actions, especially by those for whom atemporality and immutability are great-making properties. Many of these are fraught with severe and complex conceptual problems: How, for example, if God is truly immutable and atemporal, can he properly be said to enter into relationship with time-bound and mutable existents such as human persons? How, if God is truly immutable and atemporal, can he know certain things that the doctrine of his omniscience (see Morris's list, points 6 and 7) seems to require that he should know—for example, the truth of any temporally indexed proposition? And so forth. It is not my purpose to enter into, much less to adjudicate, these debates; they are complex and have generated an enormous literature.[81] For the purposes of this study, the main point is the following: if the idea of agency outlined above is accepted as a great-making property proper to God (and perhaps Morris would accept it), we have a splendid example of a property that is clearly great-making for one tradition and equally clearly not great-making for another. If, on the other hand, agency in this sense is rejected or modified by attempts to combine it with doctrines of immutability and atemporality, with distinctions between God's essential and accidental properties, and so forth—as

[81] On atemporality, eternality, and the problems such doctrines entail, see Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 428–58; Delmas Lewis, "Eternity Again: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 15 (1984): 73–79; "Persons, Morality, and Tenselessness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47 (1986): 305–9; "Timelessness and Divine Agency," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 21 (1987): 143–59; I. M. Crombie, "Eternality and Omnitemporality," in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 169–88.

would be done, perhaps, by many Thomistic thinkers—this seems always to be done in a way that preserves both God's transcendence (the idea that he is not just one more existent in the world and that there are existents which he transcends) and God's genuine salvific interactions with temporally bound existents in a historical process that has independent reality. Here, of course, the doctrine of the incarnation is paradigmatic, but it is not the only constraint on Christian thought in this area. So even if the concept of agency is modified by combining it with doctrines of atemporality and immutability, certain key contrasts with the Yogācāra view of maximal greatness are still preserved. For a Yogācāra theorist, if Buddha's agency were conceived in either the strong sense (in accord with my outline thereof) or in a modified sense (in accord with an atemporalist view of God), Buddha could not be Buddha. Agency, in either sense, is simply not a great-making property for the tradition.

This difference in intuitions concerning the status of the properties of agency, freedom, and temporality is based upon and grows naturally out of fundamental metaphysical differences between Buddhists and Christians. It is surely just because Christian metaphysicians tend to conceive of human beings as *imago dei* and to think of them as independent and real agents, possessors of—indeed defined by—an eternal essence, a soul which exists independently (which has *svatantratva*) of all other existents except its creator, and just because Christian metaphysicians have, as a general rule, not seriously called into question the reality of the historical process and of the (temporally located) creative event which began it, that they naturally, intuitively, regard as great-making those properties which exemplify and magnify to the greatest possible extent (within the bounds of coherence) the values of agency-in-time, of creation, and of loving concern for the inherently valuable other (see points 3–5 of Morris's definition). Likewise, it is just because Buddhist metaphysicians have always regarded agency as a particular species of event rather than as a property of persons,[82] have always judged that persons, conceived as independent entities, have only imaginary status, and have always judged that the processes of concept formation, analysis, and categorization (*prapañca, vikalpa,* etc.) are inherently productive of error and necessarily inferior to direct unmediated awareness, that they naturally, intuitively, regard as great-making those properties which exemplify and magnify to the greatest possible extent (within the bounds of coherence) the values of agentless spontaneity, universal and concept-free direct awareness.

[82] Technically, *karman* is *cetanā, cetanā* is part of the *cittacaitta* complex, and that complex is exhaustively defined as a continuum (*saṃtāna*) of momentary events. There is no "person" who possesses that series of events, no "person" to whom it is proper to say that a particular instance of volitional action (= agency) belongs.

These two sets of intuitions about what makes for maximal greatness are obviously not reconcilable. This is precisely because they are intimately, symbiotically, linked with irreconcilable metaphysical systems. A Yogācāra thinker, faced with Morris's list of great-making properties, would judge their stress on agency, freedom, benevolence, and ontological independence (for this last see item 7 in Morris's definition) to be hopelessly, perhaps even laughably, in error. Even if, from the Yogācāra perspective, there could be an existent in possession of the properties listed by Morris, such an existent would not be very great. It would be deceived about its own ontological status and that of others to precisely the extent that it thought of itself as other than them and as independent of them. It would be deceived if it thought that the constructed product of its own awareness reflected Suchness, things as they really are. It might nevertheless exist, at least in the same way that ordinary human agents seem to themselves to exist, and might seem, both to itself and to those human agents who receive its acts, to be of great salvific significance. But it could not be, in Morris's words, "the ontologically independent creative source of all else" since, to a Yogācāra thinker (and to most Buddhists), the description is oxymoronic. It is axiomatic for the Yogācāra tradition that radical interdependence (*parantantratva*) is a defining characteristic of all existents. Ontologically independent creativity is an unexemplified property, and if, *per impossibile,* it should be exemplified, it would certainly not be great-making. It is a commonplace of Buddhist antitheistic arguments that God, if he exists, is deluded about his own properties and status. Buddha, by contrast, since it is defined by universal direct awareness, and since that awareness is identical with the sum of all members of the set of interdependent existents (which is itself co-existent with the set of all existents), both exists (as *parinispannasvabhāva* and *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*) and cannot, *per definiens,* be deluded.

A final question: how can such radical differences in intuitions about what constitutes maximal greatness be resolved? Since these differences in many cases rest upon differences in metaphysical views, some of them may be resolved by the usual methods of argument and debate. If a particular metaphysical position should turn out to be among the truth- or coherence-conditions of a particular intuition about great-making properties, and if the metaphysical position in question should turn out to be flawed, internally incoherent, or otherwise undesirable, then, presumably, the intuition will have to go (or at least be significantly modified). For instance: suppose it should turn out to be the case (as in fact I think it does) that some of the great-making properties listed by Morris require, in order that they may be coherently though exemplifiable, the truth of some such proposition as *one can meaningfully draw a distinction between the essential and accidental properties of some existents,* and suppose further that

the standard Buddhist arguments against the separability of property and property possessor (of *dharma* and *dharmin*) should turn out to be good (though I think they do not); it would then follow that (some of) Morris's intuitions about great-making properties would need correction. For, presumably, an unexemplifiable property cannot meaningfully be thought of as a great-making property. The same would apply, mutatis mutandis, to Buddhist intuitions about great-making properties and the propositions whose truth is required for their exemplifiability. But I doubt whether all disagreements about what is and what is not a great-making property can be resolved in this way. It is perhaps not inconceivable that all the propositions (together with their entailments) whose truth is required in order that a particular candidate for great-making-property status be exemplifiable should turn out to be true (or at least not demonstrably false), and that this be agreed by two people who still differ as to whether the property in question is in fact great-making. In such a case there would seem to be simply an irreducible difference in intuition, not capable of resolution by argument.

The exploration of this possibility, together with some fine-tuning of the presentation given here of the Yogācāra Buddhist view of what makes for maximal greatness, are important tasks for the future. These tasks should include an attempt to isolate and critically analyze the metaphysical presuppositions underlying the Yogācāra Buddhist intuitions, especially in cases where these differ drastically from typically Christian presuppositions, and to assess the relative merits of each. Finally (and this last task is likely to be of more interest to the intellectual historian than to the philosopher), an attempt needs to be made to show how and (nonphilosophically) why Yogācāra intuitions about maximal greatness differ from others within the Buddhist traditions. In this study I have tried only to show that Yogācāra views on Buddhahood can be usefully explored and expounded using the terminology of maximal greatness, and that Yogācāra Buddhist intuitions about what makes for such are, on almost every level, radically incompatible with (most) Christian intuitions on the same question.

JOHN TABER

REASON, REVELATION AND IDEALISM IN ŚAṄKARA'S VEDĀNTA[1]

Although comparative philosophy has come to be more widely practised in recent years, it is still practised, by and large, in a state of methodological confusion. It is generally agreed that there is much to be gained in placing philosophical theories from different cultures side by side. We gain a new perspective on the theory we are familiar with from our own culture. We sometimes become aware of solutions or objections to solutions to problems which hitherto in our own tradition have not been posed. Even when the categories of the thought of one culture do not fit those of another culture and the considerations of their respective philosophies cannot be brought mutually to bear on each other, still one often realizes thereby more distinctly what one particular philosophical tradition is *not* getting at, what is beyond its scope, which helps us to understand better what it *is* getting at and ultimately helps us evaluate it. But it is unclear whether comparative philosophy can really deliver on these items. For the comparative philosopher is faced with extraordinary difficulties, due less to the multi-disciplinary competence required of him – one, clearly, has to be well-versed in two or more literatures – than the exacting demands placed on him by two separate sets of scholars with different presuppositions and methods that lay claim to his object of study. I am referring to the philosophers, on the one hand, and the linguists on the other. It has been the linguists who have opened up for us the classical literature of the Orient and pioneered the exploration of its meaning. Their concern has been primarily to edit critically the important texts, to establish their dates and place them in an historical context, to determine the meaning of individual concepts and terms by a sort of multiple cross-referencing between texts of the same period, to trace the origin and development of particular ideas over time, and so on. The linguist proceeds as an empiricist, gathering data from the texts themselves as the sole foundation of his conclusions. The philosopher, however, is almost exclusively concerned with the *validity* of the ideas of the texts in question. This often takes him beyond their literal meaning, to consider, for example, the implications of arguments, the abstract states of affairs he discerns behind the words which

they may adequately or inadequately express. Comparative philosophy has suffered from undue inflexibility on the part of both philologists and philosophers. The former have claimed, understandably, that the philosophical evaluation of Asian philosophy cannot begin until we have thoroughly *understood* it, i.e., determined its literal meaning – and that on the basis of texts reliably edited. The latter just as reasonably suggest that it is not worth the effort attempting to understand Asian philosophy if Asian philosophy does not hold out any promise of providing new and better insights into the nature of things, if, indeed, as sometimes seems to be the case, it is absurd! The philosopher might add that we have no right talking about having understood a philosophical text unless we have achieved a critical philosophical appreciation of the problems it treats in all their ramifications. Kipling's dictum that East is East and West is West, was disposed of a long time ago. The fact that immediately appears when one studies Indian philosophy – the branch of Asian philosophy I shall be concerned with here – is that it deals with many of the issues that have been dealt with in European philosophy: the problem of universals, problems of reference and meaning, the issue of the external world, the analysis of causation, the problem of personal identity, to mention just a few. But a version of Kipling's saying, substituting "philology" and "philosophy", may well be true.

In the present discussion I would like to demonstrate how I think both a reasonably broad comprehension of philosophy and linguistic competence are indispensable for the adequate understanding of Asian philosophy in a particular case. Since, one has to admit, philologists have up till now been dominant in this area, I approach the matter from the philosopher's side by showing how, typically, philological analysis can go wrong in ignoring philosophical concerns. The philosopher I shall deal with is Śaṅkara, the great Indian Vedānta philosopher of the 8th century.

I

Recent research on Śaṅkara's philosophy has focussed, among other things, on certain idiosyncracies of Śaṅkara's method of philosophical argumentation. Conclusions have been drawn about his intellectual traits or his intellectual development on the basis of observations about his employment or, more typically, avoidance of rigorous logical proof in certain circumstances. This has led to criteria for determining the chronological order of Śaṅkara's

writings or the authenticity of works traditionally ascribed to him. For example, the late Prof. Hacker notes that Śaṅkara's reasoning, while usually quite thorough, is peculiarly weak when he attempts to establish the central monistic tenet of his system that Brahman, the self, experienced as the eternal witnessing consciousness beyond the mind, is One.[2] Śaṅkara tends to rely primarily on scriptural assertions here. Hacker has attempted to explain this peculiarity (along with other facts) by supposing that Śaṅkara was originally an adherent of Yoga philosophy who was later converted to monistic (Advaita) Vedānta. In *reasoning* about God Śaṅkara tended to revert back to the familiar and well worked-out framework for thinking about Īśvara (God) of the dualistic Yoga school.[3] This is noted in particular in connection with Śaṅkara's arguments for God's existence. Prof. Ingalls has remarked on Śaṅkara's evasiveness in answering the question, "Whose is *avidyā*?" or, to paraphrase this, "Who is responsible for the ignorance that binds the soul in the cycle of transmigration?"[4] He suggests that disinterest in strictly philosophical questions such as this in favor of concentrating on leading the disciple directly to salvation may be seen as one of Śaṅkara's distinctive characteristics. Tilmann Vetter has critically analysed Śaṅkara's arguments for idealism and has shown that the same arguments Śaṅkara uses in one place to prove the illusoriness of the external world are the exact same arguments refuted by him as Buddhist perversions in another place.[5] Vetter, like Hacker, attributes this discrepancy to different stages in Śaṅkara's philosophical development. In light of the preoccupation of recent scholars with Śaṅkara's use or abuse of dialectic it would be well to consider here a discussion Śaṅkara presents in his *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* (BrSūBh) that concerns the role of reason and its relation to scripture in ascertaining the ultimate, liberating truth about the self, in general.[5a] Since the BrSūBh is the standard of authenticity for Śaṅkara's writings (i.e., Śaṅkara is the author of the BrSūBh *by definition*), there is no question to be raised here as to whether these ideas are truly his own.[6]

At BrSūBh 1.1.2, i.e., toward the very beginning of that work, Śaṅkara asserts that the opening statement of the text he is commenting on – Bāḍarāyaṇa's *Brahma Sūtras* – does not represent a conclusion arrived at by inference or reasoning,[7] but is meant rather as a summary of scriptural doctrine. The statement in question, as Śaṅkara clarifies it, is, "Brahman is the cause of the origin, subsistence and dissolution of the universe." The *sūtras* or aphorisms, he explains, have the purpose of stringing together the flowers of the Vedānta passages (here he plays on the meaning of the word

sūtra, which is literally 'a string'). For cited by the *sūtras*, the passages are then reflected on. And knowledge of Brahman results from reflecting on and determining the meaning of scriptural passages, not from inference or other ways of knowing. But if scriptural passages such as those dealing with the cause of the world have been presented, then inference, being a means of correct knowledge insofar as it does not conflict with scripture, is not to be rejected as an aid in ascertaining their meaning (*tadarthagrahaṇadārḍhyāya*).[8] To underline the admissibility of reasoning in this regard Śaṅkara quotes from scripture itself: "The self is to be seen, to be heard, to be thought about, to be meditated on" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II.4.5). Śaṅkara goes on in this section to admit that scripture is not the only adequate way of knowing Brahman. There is also intuition (*anubhava*). Knowledge of Brahman *results* in an intuition – the confirming intuition of its essence precipitated by the Upaniṣad discourse – and concerns a concretely existing thing (*bhūtavastu*, which is Brahman itself – unlike knowledge of Dharma, which is first brought into existence by knowledge about it in the form of prescriptions).[9] But this does not bring it within the sphere of inference and perception, the other usually valid ways of knowing, because, although an object of intuition, Brahman is not an object of the *senses.*[10] A connection between it and the world as its effect cannot be empirically perceived. Therefore the assertion of the *sūtra* that Brahman is the cause of the world cannot be the conclusion of a logical inference. (The suggestion here seems to be that there is no way to establish as a general premise that a universe of a certain type has Brahman as its cause, from which one might draw the conclusion that this particular universe does.)[11]

In the second book, first chapter, Śaṅkara expands these arguments over several sections of commentary in the form of a dispute between a Vedāntin and an opponent, in this case a Sāṃkhya philosopher.[12] Here the topic is much the same as before, namely, whether Brahman is the material cause of the universe. The Sāṃkhya, in saying that one ought to be able to use reason in determining this, harps on the fact that scripture itself says reasoning is valid. Śaṅkara responds by citing several scriptural passages that appear to reject logic, indicating that those that uphold it are meant to be somehow qualified.[13] He concludes, addressing his opponent: "When it is said that the scripture itself, in that it prescribes thinking separate from hearing (cf. Bṛh. Up. II.4.5, quoted above), shows that logic is to be given its place [I reply that] the introduction of bare ratiocination (*śuṣkatarkasya* = literally, 'dry

logic') is not possible by this ruse. Only aided by scripture, as auxiliary to intuition, is logic to be resorted to."[14] This reiterates what we have already heard. But Śaṅkara goes on to give some examples of what he would consider to be admissible logical argument with regard to Brahman or the self, namely, "Because the dreaming state and waking state exclude each other, the self is not associated with those; because in deep sleep one unites with being, leaving diversity behind, [the self] has pure being as its essence; [and] because the universe has Brahman as its cause, it is non-different from Brahman by the principle of the unity of cause and effect."[15] It is precisely the last argument which Śaṅkara expounds at length in the first chapter of the second book, and indeed only in defense of scriptural assertions that originally establish the point (BrSūBh 2.1.14).

At BrSūBh 2.1.11 Śaṅkara's attack on independent reason becomes more intense. Reasoned argument without scripture is *unfounded* (*apratiṣṭhita*), he argues, because it is based on the mere opinions of men, and human opinion is unchecked. Thus we find arguments excogitated with great pains by certain clever men being proved fallacious by other even cleverer men. And those thought up by them are refuted by others in turn. So one can't assume reason to have a foundation, because of the diversity of men's opinions. Not even the logic of those who are widely considered to be realized (*prasiddhamahātmyasya . . . tarkaḥ*), like Kapila (the legendary author of the Sāṃkhya system), can be depended on. For they, too, differ among themselves. When it is objected that if reasoning were totally rejected then human activity would come to an end – because it depends on the assumption that the future will be like the past, and so on – Śaṅkara gives the reasonable reply that although independent argument is admissible in some cases, it is not admissible in matters of the highest truth. Here we must have recourse to something more reliable than reason, because liberation (*mokṣa*) follows only upon right or perfect knowledge (*saṃyagjñāna*), about which there can be no possibility of doubt. To quote his words: "All those who believe in liberation hold that it follows from perfect knowledge. Now perfect knowledge is uniform, because it depends on a thing [in this case, Brahman]. What exists in a single [unalterable] form is the true thing. Knowledge that has that for its object is considered perfect, like when we say, 'Fire is hot.' But the conflict of ideas based on logic is well known, because they contradict each other. . . . However, since the Veda has for its object a firmly established thing, being eternal and being the cause of the origin of science (*vijñānotpattihetutve*), all

the logicians of the past, present or future cannot refute the rightness of the knowledge derived from it. Thus the perfection of the knowledge of the Upaniṣads is established indeed."[16]

To summarize Śaṅkara's view: Śaṅkara rejects reasoning with regard to matters properly known only through scripture – namely, the self, God, Brahman (all three of which the Śaṅkara's philosophy are identical) – but admits it for other pruposes. He seems to agree, for example, that reasoning must be employed in resolving apparent discrepancies between Vedic texts.[17] And, this rejection is itself a *reasoned* one. Śaṅkara argues that Brahman is not the sort of thing that can be known any other way. In the last passage from which I quoted he reiterates that Brahman cannot be ascertained through perception because it is without form (it is "utterly profound", *atigambhīra*), nor through inference, because it has no characteristic (*liṅga*) which can serve as a middle term.[18] (Inference depends on establishing that a thing which has a certain characteristic, the middle term, is contained within a larger class for which a certain property, the major term, holds true.)

It should be remarked that Śaṅkara's ideas on this point are much like those of St. Thomas Aquinas with regard to the relation of natural and revealed theology. St. Thomas also believed that matters of ultimate importance, i.e., human salvation, cannot be left to philosophers. Natural theology must be supplemented by revealed theology: "It was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides the philosophical sciences investigated by human reason. First, because man is directed to God as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason."[19] However, St. Thomas did believe that a metaphysical system centering on a rationally conceived idea of God was possible, although necessarily incomplete and containing a certain amount of error.[20] This comes out, for example, in his discussion of the possibility of a proof of God's existence. He considers an objection to any attempt to prove that God exists very similar to Śaṅkara's objection that the Absolute does not have any "mark" which can serve as a middle term, namely, "Essence is the middle term of demonstration. But we cannot know in what God's essence consists but solely in what it does not consist. . . . Therefore we cannot demonstrate that God exists."[21] But St. Thomas replies by pointing out that, "When the existence of a cause is demonstrated from an effect, the effect takes the place of the definition of the cause in proving the cause's existence. This is especially the case in regard

to God, because, in order to prove the existence of anything, it is necessary to accept as a middle term the meaning of the name, and not its essence, for the question of its essence follows on the question of its existence."[22] What this means is, the demonstration of God's existence does not proceed by way of a syllogism. Rather, from the observation that the world has the nature of an effect, we infer that it must have a cause, and, from the specific make-up of the world (it is dynamic, ordered, exhibits a scale of things more or less good or perfect), we infer something – although perhaps very little – about the essence of the cause (it is the unmoved mover, intelligent, perfect and good, etc.). Interestingly enough, we find Śaṅkara in one of his works, the *Kena Upaniṣad Vākyabhāṣya*, providing a version of one of the very theological arguments that St. Thomas now goes on to outline – the so-called physico-theological proof, the argument from design.[23] Śaṅkara's proof proceeds not from an observation of order in nature *per se*, but from the observation of the world as suitable for the experience of a wide variety of living beings. Such a world must be the product of an omniscient Lord who knows the distribution of *karma*. This appears, then, to contradict the radically sceptical attitude toward the employment of reason Śaṅkara presents in the BrSūBh. If we are to interpret this discrepancy systematically rather than simply let it stand and, once again, refer it to separate phases of Śaṅkara's intellectual development, then I believe we must assume that Śaṅkara, like St. Thomas, made a distinction in this matter between proving *that* God exists and showing *what He is like*. This is a natural distinction, after all. It is one thing to know, say, that someone broke into my house and stole my TV set, a completely different thing to know *who*. In St. Thomas' words: "From effects not proportioned to the cause no perfect knowledge of that cause can be obtained. Yet from every effect the existence of the cause can be clearly demonstrated, and so we can demonstrate the existence of God from His effects; though from them we cannot know God perfectly as He is in His essence."[24] And in the BrSūBh we find indications that Śaṅkara thought Brahman's existence, at least, indubitable. It is already known from the word *Brahman*, which etymologically implies something pure, free, enlightened; it is the self, and no one can intelligibly deny oneself.[25] But, Śaṅkara emphasizes, opinions differ as to its *nature*.[26] Thus in the *Kena Upaniṣad Vākyabhāṣya* passage where Sankara demonstrates God's existence logically *via* the design argument, he dispenses with pure logic and resorts to scripture when he comes to God's Oneness.[27] That is the feature about that

passage that particularly disturbed Hacker and led him to postulate the presence of a doctrinal bias. It is now clear, I hope, that it is also explainable on philosophical grounds. And in a sense, I think, one can say that one has not fully understood this peculiarity of Śaṅkara's thought if one has not understood the philosophical concern behind it.

The difference between Śankara and St. Thomas on this issue, then, is with respect to *how much* we can know about God beyond his mere existing by natural reason. St. Thomas was confident that natural reason can provide us, at least, with reliable knowledge of what God *is not*, and he gives arguments intended to show that God is simple (i.e., without parts), incorporeal, infinite, immutable, and – most significantly – One (not plural). Śaṅkara *attributes* all these properties to God, but he does not *deduce* them. The difference ultimately comes down to differing views about salvation. The perfect vision of God's essence constitutes salvation for both of these philosophers. But St. Thomas sees such a vision as arising only after death (or in rapture), when the intellect is completely separated from the senses and made finally commensurate with God's essence (in effect, deified) through an act of His Grace. Meanwhile the soul in its present state of worldly existence is prepared for the reception of His Grace through faith buttressed by the application of reason as far as it will go. These notions are connected in turn with a sort of epistemology to be extracted from St. Thomas' writings piecemeal: the intellect *qua* intellect is directed toward being in general, i.e., God. In its embodied state, however, it apprehends being only as exhibited in sensible objects.[28] It can arrive at God through the investigation of material things insofar as they are manifestations of His essence, as their cause. But such knowledge is imperfect – it will in no case adequately comprehend such mysteries as God's triune personality – and although possible in principle, is usually in fact to a certain extent contaminated by error. (When St. Thomas makes this point in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.4, noting the "different things taught by the various men who are called wise," he sounds very much like Śaṅkara complaining about the vicissitudes of the history of philosophy).[29] Śaṅkara, on the other hand, conceives of a perfect vision and union with God in this life. This claim is not based on a theory of knowledge – conspicuously lacking in Śaṅkara's philosophy – but rather on what he takes to be indisputable fact revealed by scripture.[30] But a detailed comparison of Śaṅkara and Aquinas on this point would take us too far afield. In sum, we have an interesting criss-crossing of attitudes. Whereas St. Thomas was

basically a rationalist (we can know something significant about God through reason) who nevertheless believed that thorough knowledge of the Supreme was unattainable (he was apparently satisfied with the limited knowledge we can have for now), Śaṅkara was an anti-rationalist (we can know nothing significant about God through logic beyond his existence) who nevertheless believed a thorough, mystical knowledge is possible.

There is another passage in Śaṅkara's writings that casts doubt on whether he held unswervingly to the doctrine of the limitation of philosophical argument and its subordination to theology. I have in mind a remark that crops up in a discussion in the *Bṛhādaraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* concerning the nature of bliss. According to Advaita Vedānta the Absolute cannot be indicated directly in any positive way. The only true way of talking about it is in strictly negative terms. Nevertheless, it can be analogically referred to or implied by the positive expressions *sat, cit, ānanda*: Being, Consciousness, Bliss. (Again, we are reminded of a similar discussion in Thomistic theology about the analogical application of names to God.)[31] The liberated Advaitin realizes the nature of Brahman as such, that it is *in essence* these things; i.e., it does not exist, but it is *the Existence*; it is not conscious, but it is Conscious*ness*; it is not bliss*ful*, but it is Bliss itself. At Bṛh. Up. Bh. III.9.28.7 the question is raised whether this bliss that the liberated soul realizes can in any sense be said to be felt (*saṃvedya*); is it something to be cognized?[32] It is suggested, as a first attempt at an answer, that it indeed must be felt because scripture in effect testifies to it. Such passages as *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II.5.1, "He enjoys all desires," *sarvān kāmān samaśnute*, are cited. But the objection is raised that when there is Oneness, that is, in liberation, when the self has completely dissolved into the Absolute, knowledge is impossible. For the separate factors involved in the act of knowing (subject, object, instrument, etc.) are absent. The discussion proceeds, verbatim: "The objection does not hold. Let there be knowledge with bliss as its object by the authority of the [holy] word! . . . Scriptural statements like, '[Brahman is truth,] knowledge, bliss,' (Tai. Up. II.1.1) would be invalid if that which consists of bliss were incapable of being felt. [Objection:] But not even a scriptural statement (*vacanenāpi*) can make fire cold or water hot, for the statements are [merely] informative (*jñāpakatvād vacanānām*). Nor can it teach that in some other place fire is cold, or that in some country where we have never been water is hot."[33] Here the word of the Veda appears to be set aside because of a logical consideration. Scripture in this instance, it

would seem, can be decisively contradicted by reason. Indeed, the issue is finally decided in the *siddhānta* in favor of the logician (i.e. The Vedāntin resting his case on logic). Śaṅkara points out that there can be no knowledge in the absence of a body and perceptual faculties. Liberation is the complete separation from the body. Without the body as a basis, the perceptual faculties cannot operate.[34] It is re-emphasized that a *feeling* of bliss would contradict the oneness of Brahman, implying a division of subject and object. What kind of realization of bliss do we have if not a feeling, a cognition of it? A merging, an identification with it, "like a handful of water thrown into a pond."[35]

These remarks taken by themselves appear to defy the misological stance of the BrSūBh, but their context immediately reveals that they are in fact compatible with what is said there. For the discussion begins with the observation that scripture is actually inconsistent on the issue of bliss. Some passages suggest a feeling, an experience of bliss as pleasure or happiness. Other passages clearly state the absence of any object-directed, intentional awareness: e.g., Bṛh. Up. II.4.14, "But when [to the knower of Brahman] everything has become the self, then what should one smell and through what; what should one see and through what . . . what should one know and through what?" But in BrSūBh 2.1.11 Śaṅkara (implicitly) admits the application of reasoned argument in settling apparent conflicts between texts.[36] And he explicitly acknowledges this principle here: "Because conflicting scriptural passages are seen, an analysis is to be undertaken."[37] Thus the present discussion of the Bṛh. Up. Bh. confirms our findings with regard to the BrSūBh, that Śaṅkara believes rational argument ought not to be excluded in all cases but only in attempting to apprehend the highest metaphysical truth. In the matter of scriptural exegesis it can and indeed sometimes must be applied; and in that case certain 'lesser' metaphysical considerations can be relevant (such as the correct analysis of causality in interpreting the Vedic account of the creation of the world and its relation to the Absolute). It is obvious from all this that the exegetical method for Śaṅkara assumes the validity of the principle of non-contradiction for the Veda. The latter cannot both affirm and deny a certain predicate ('to be felt', *saṃvedya*) with respect to a certain thing ('bliss', *ānanda*) at the same time. It cannot do this in effect by making assertions in separate passages, which taken together imply a contradiction. All passages from all parts of the Veda must be consistent. It cannot, in any single passage, assert a contradiction directly. This, I take it, is the point of saying the Veda cannot

by mere fiat make fire cold.[37a] It should not go unnoticed that this amounts to a certain concession to rationality on Śaṅkara's part. Divine revelation is at least bound by the fundamental rules of logic. There is something higher which it must obey. The reader perhaps need not be reminded that it was a Western philosopher – Descartes – who suggested that God in His omnipotence is answerable to no person or principle. He is the author of the laws of logic and mathematics and could rescind them at any time if He so decreed.[38]

Now it is my main contention in this paper that all those cases where Hacker and others think Śaṅkara's method of argumentation is problematic (either too lax or, by contrast, too strict), can be accounted for in terms of the stance he adopts with regard to the relation of logic and theology which I have outlined. The long dialogue in the second prose chapter of the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, for example, in which a Vedānta master leads his disciple to self-realization simply by pointing out certain facts about the relation of the self to the body and mind and its status in different states of consciousness, to which Hacker has called attention as a prime example of Śaṅkara's strictly philosophical writing (there is not a single Vedic sentence quoted in the whole passage)[39] – this dialogue comes under the topics listed by Śaṅkara at BrSūBh 2.1.6 as suitable for philosophical discussion (see above, p. 287): "Because the dreaming state and the waking state exclude each other, the self is not associated with those; because in deep sleep one unites with being, leaving diversity behind, [the self] has pure being as its essence." This argument, in essence, occurs at *Upadeśasāhasrī Gadyaprabandha* II.86–90. At BrSūBh 4.1.2 it is related to other arguments that appear there which are intended to show the mistakenness of the notion that the self is subject to pain, etc. But instead of taking issue with everything Hacker *et al.* have to say in this regard, I shall devote the remainder of this essay to proving my point especially in regard to the case of Śaṅkara's conflicting arguments for and against idealism. Although the discussion will take us over some already charted territory, I feel it is justified because scholars continue to lose their way there. As I said at the outset, Hacker and Vetter have concentrated on Śaṅkara's vacillation between idealism and realism in attempting to show stages in his philosophical development. Now idealism and realism in Śaṅkara's system have to do ultimately with the problem of monism, the relation of the Absolute to the world. If one can prove, i.e., that the world in the diversity in which it is represented in consciousness is a mere idea, an illusion, then there exists

only that one thing which underlies consciousness, and one obtains monism. Hacker suggests that Śaṅkara sometimes fails to follow up on idealistic trains of thought discoverable in the Upaniṣads and in fact developed by other Vedāntins. According to Hacker, as I have noted, this was because his monistic inclinations are actually weak, due to his background in the Yoga tradition. Vetter, strangely, implies that Śaṅkara gives up idealism for realism when he *renounces* Yoga.[40] But I believe there is a better way to make sense of these matters.

II

Śaṅkara's arguments *contra* the reality of the external world are given at length in the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā Bhāṣya* (MKBh).[41] Now this text, like most of those we have from Śaṅkara, is a commentary on another text, a text established as authoritative within the Vedānta tradition. Śaṅkara could not have deviated very far from the text without incurring the charge of heterodoxy. Moreover, the primary text (the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda) is of a relatively late date, comparatively unambiguous in style and wording. Śaṅkara is therefore given little leeway in his interpretation, compared to what he normally has in interpreting an Upaniṣad or, indeed, the *Brahma Sūtras*, which without a commentary are virtually unintelligible. Now the idealistic bent of Gauḍapāda's *kārikās* is quite clear. Śaṅkara is therefore compelled to follow suit. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Śaṅkara did not agree with Gauḍapāda's ideas at the time he commented on them. Indeed, it would be difficult for us to believe that he would have commented on them if he had not by and large agreed with them. The content of Śaṅkara's actual arguments against the reality of the external world does not concern us so much here, but perhaps it would be well to summarize them briefly: Śaṅkara argues that there is no significant distinction between the types of experiences one has in waking and in dreaming. Objects in both states of consciousness have the same property of "being perceived" (*dṛśyatva*). Therefore, the things that one 'perceives', so to speak, during the waking state are equally illusory (MKBh II.4). Moreover, the *possibility* of an external object is doubted. There is no cause of one's perception of a jar apart from the clay that makes up the jar; a cloth can be reduced to the threads out of which it is woven. If one investigates reality successively until words and concepts cease, one does not apprehend any external occasion for knowledge, say, a real jar apart from the

clay or a thing that is a *cloth* different from the yarn (MKBh IV.25). Finally, Śaṅkara doubts the veracity of perceptions in waking because they are annulled in other states of consciousness. Experiences of the waking state are contradicted by dreams (MKBh II.7). Diversity disappears completely in deep sleep and *samādhi* (MKBh IV.25).[42]

What I would like to draw attention to is not the valdity or invalidity of these arguments but the metalogical framework of the MKBh, if one may use that term – Śaṅkara's remarks about what he is doing when he presents these and other arguments. There is no way of getting around the fact that Śaṅkara denies the reality of the external world in this work. But I think that one can see in the manner in which he (once again, closely following Gauḍapāda) presents his denial an anticipation of the sceptical attitude toward reason that flares up later on in the BrSūBh, thus perhaps, even here, an ambivalence toward his own arguments. To begin with, Śaṅkara is conscious that Gauḍapāda in the last three *prakaraṇas* of the MK is proceeding strictly logically. As he states it: the unity of Brahman is asserted dogmatically in the first *prakaraṇa*. Gauḍapāda undertakes the second *prakaraṇa* to show that by logical demonstration (*upapatti*) also (not just scripture) the falseness of duality can be ascertained.[43] The third *prakaraṇa* attempts to establish on the basis of logic (*tarka*) non-duality – i.e., that in place of a phenomenal world which has been shown to be illusory a real world does exist[44] – while the fourth confirms the same in showing that those who hold to the view of duality necessarily contradict each other.[45] Thus we might say that the MK for Śaṅkara is a bold flight into the realm of pure speculation. Nevertheless there are, here and there, reversions back to the secure refuge of sacred doctrine. Thus MK II.31, III.11–13, 23–26 contain allusions to scriptural passages which are elaborated by Śaṅkara in the commentary. The need for these revelations to supplement the independent line of argument is implied.[46] Explicitly, Śaṅkara says at II.35, "The highest self can be seen only by those wise men free from fault, intent on the meaning of the Vedānta, who have renounced [the world], not by logicians whose minds are defiled by passion and hold strictly to their own views;"[47] at III.11, "[The self] is not, like the self imagined by the logicians, to be understood by means of knowledge based on the human intellect."[48]

Another point to be especially noted here is that the logic in the MK and MKBh is chiefly negative or destructive. Unity is proved only by showing the absurdity of the opposite view of duality, which is demonstrated by the

mutually contradictory arguments set forth by its proponents. Thus in *prakaraṇas* III and IV it is argued that there can be no birth, no real origin of diverse things from out of the self, which ultimately means, the multiplicity we experience is an illusion. Those who maintain there is birth either hold that the effect pre-exists in the cause or that it is something entirely new. In the first case, either the supposedly eternal cause of things itself undergoes change (it being non-different from its effect) or the effect represents nothing over and above it (i.e., no change really occurs).[49] In the second case, something would have to come from nothing.[50] But these possibilities are absurd. Thus the two alternatives demolish each other and non-birth, that is, non-duality, is left over. Significantly, the debate about the reality of the external world in *prakaraṇa* IV is placed in a context like this. The party who attacks realism is identified by Śaṅkara as a Vijñānavādin Buddhist. Gauḍapāda agrees with him, according to Śaṅkara, insofar as his argument is intended to refute the realist.[51] But then he (Gauḍapāda) goes on to use the same reasoning to refute the Vijñānavādin himself: Just as external objects are illusory, so the apparent changes *within* consciousness do not really take place. There is one eternal consciousness; the momentariness attributed to it by the Buddhist is false.[52] Thus the Vedāntin can sit back and watch his opponents defeat each other, leaving the field free for him to occupy without a struggle. As Śaṅkara puts it in one place, "Contradicting each others' views about whether birth proceeds from what [already] exists or what does not exist, the dualists in effect demonstrate non-birth. . . . By saying, 'Let this be so!' we simply approve the birthlessness revealed by them . . . we do not quarrel with them."[53] Thus non-duality (*advaita*) is a philosophy "without dispute" (*avivāda*).

Now it seems but a short step from this sophistical attitude toward reason to an attitude of complete mistrust of it, even in its strictly negative capacity. This becomes evident when one considers how far this way of argumentation leads Śaṅkara into metaphysical nihilism and that the barrier he believes keeps him from falling into a nihilistic position is very flimsy indeed. To clarify: In denying the existence of an external world Śaṅkara believes he has affirmed the primacy of the internal world, the life of consciousness. Further, he believes he has shown that consciousness itself is homogeneous and unchanging. The constant flux attributed to it by the Vijñānavādin is also an illusion. There is only one, eternal, pure consciousness – the Non-dual. But what positive evidence do we have for this non-duality? When we eliminate

the external world and then go on to subtract multiple conscious experiences, are we not in fact left with simply nothing? This is indeed the conclusion arrived at by the Śūnyavādin Buddhists, a conclusion that Śaṅkara determinedly tries to resist by appealing to the principle that an illusion, though unreal, requires a real substratum.[54] He presents this idea in a long discussion at MKBh II.32, which at this point deserves to be analysed. There he refers to the well-known analogy of a rope falsely imagined to be a snake: when the hallucination of the snake is gone, the thing that is not imagined, the rope, is still there. But an opponent objects that this analogy is inappropriate insofar as the rope, too, serving as the substratum of the false notion of the snake, is imagined. (Indeed, Śaṅkara in his idealistic arguments has done away with all concrete objects that might serve as the basis for an analogy. In denying the existence of the external world altogether he has done away with ropes, deserts, lakes, the sorts of thing on which hallucinations are usually projected.) Śaṅkara, however, goes on to insist that what remains when false notions are sublated is real and not imagined, simply by the fact that it is what is left behind when imaginations cease. And when we recognize it for what it is, we assume it to have been there all along. Moreover, he concludes, since everyone assumes that the agent of imagining – which for him is none other than the self, i.e., the Non-dual – is given prior to the rise of the false notion (of duality), its non-existence is impossible.[55] Now in evaluating Śaṅkara's arguments it will be readily seen that his solution for the problem of nihilism is largely gratuitous. He assumes that when duality is removed there *is* something left behind, a viable candidate for the real, while that is precisely what the Śūnyavādin wishes to have proved. Moreover, although a coherent self-denial may be impossible – that, I take it, is what he is referring to in his final statement about the agent of imagination[56] – that does not mean that the function of subjectivity, the self, will still remain when no denials or affirmations are made, when no experience is had whatsoever. Whether Śaṅkara could ultimately salvage the notion of a pure consciousness at the basis of appearances along these lines is a moot question here. The point is, his argument simply leaves off with this suggestion. He does not go on to scrutinize the idea of the self with the same zeal, the same ruthless logic that he applies to the notions of duality and becoming. Had he done so, he would have come to see in this matter also powerful negative arguments lined up on both sides of the issue.[56a]

To put this point somewhat differently, Śaṅkara may very well have been,

at the end of composing the MKBh, on the verge of a transition in his thinking that actually occurred in the history of Buddhism. Two main schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India have been mentioned: the nihilistic Śūnyavāda, or the doctrine of emptiness, and the more positively oriented Vijñānavāda, the doctrine of consciousness-only. We know that, historically, the Vijñānavāda came after the Śūnyavāda and almost certainly represents a reaction against the extreme apophasis of the latter.[57] For the Vijñānavāda teaches not just the unreality of the external world and the exclusive reality of subjective experience. It also postulates an unchanging, unconditioned pure thought underlying ever-changing subjective experiences, very much like Śaṅkara's pure consciousness[58] – a fact that Śaṅkara in his critique of Buddhism notoriously ignores. It may well be that the MKBh represents an effort on Śaṅkara's part to think through for himself the negative approach to the Absolute, at the end of which he arrives at the same feeling of dissatisfaction that the Buddhists felt for a theory that is in effect no theory, which simply kicks away all the supports for thought. It is in this sense reasonable that Śaṅkara, discontented with the results achieved by strictly negative rational analysis in Vedānta, would in subsequent works look to a more powerful source of knowledge than mere argument on which to rely in affirming his conviction in a positive ultimate – namely, scripture.

When we turn to the BrSūBh, in any case, we find Śaṅkara arguing passionately *against* idealism.[59] But this is certainly not because he has come to believe that the arguments of the realist are *right* while those of the idealist are *wrong*. Upon examination the arguments for both sides reveal little that was not already brought to light in the debate of the MKBh. It is just that now the arguments that occurred there in the *pūrvapakṣa* (objections) occur here in the *siddhānta* (thesis) and *vice versa.*[60] In other words, Śaṅkara has not changed his mind because of compelling new logical considerations having to do with the realism/idealism issue itself. Nor is this change of allegiance to be attributed to a turning away from Yoga, as Vetter suggests. What that would have to do with the matter is obscure.[60a] Moreover, there is not much evidence in favor of the hypothesis that Śaṅkara completely renounced the practise of Yoga as a means to liberation and much evidence against it, as I argue elsewhere.[61] Rather, I believe that this reversion from idealism back to realism with respect to, specifically, the facts of perception and the problem of the external world has to do, in the first place, with Śaṅkara's loss of faith in the power of rational argument altogether – for the reasons which he

expounds at length in the BrSūBh itself and which I have endeavored to explain in this paper – and, in the second place, with the emergence of the conviction that scripture proceeds in a manner quite different from that of the subjective idealist in demonstrating the illusoriness of the world. With regard to the latter point, Ingalls has made some cogent observations which it seems appropriate to quote here:

> Śaṃkara did not *begin* by denying the reality of the workaday world; he was forced into this position in order only to explain the unchanging and eternal and universal *brahma*. This appears very clearly when we review the passages in which Śaṃkara defends his theory of *avidyā* (ignorance) and *māyā* (illusion). One may sum up the defense under three headings. First, *the inner truth* (see, for example, I.i.1). Given the immediate knowledge of the constant self, we cannot righly attribute to this self the variations of the external world. Then, *the ultimate truth* (see, for example, II.i.27). Given the concept of a partless *brahma*, which is universal, we cannot explain the external world as parts of *brahma*, nor can we explain changing circumstances as varying states of *brahma*. The external world must be simply an appearance. Thirdly, *scripture* (for example, II.i.14). Naturally, Śaṃkara puts this first and derives his theory from his interpretation of such passages as *tat kena kaṃ vijānīyāt* (then [viz., when duality has ceased] by what means would one know that?) and *vācārambhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyam* (according to the interpretation of Śaṃkara, which has been much contested, this means: "the alteration [of the one into many] depends on speech; it is simply a name"). Whatever facet of this defense we examine, we find it begins with the reality of *brahma*; the unreality of the external world follows only as a deduction.[62]

Stating this somewhat differently, according to the actual sequence of the teaching in the BrSūBh: the procedure of developing monism there is to maintain, first, that Brahman is the source of the universe (1.1.2); second, to specify that this means it is the *material cause* of everything (I.4.23); finally, in accordance with such scriptural passages as *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 4.1.4 ("As by one lump of clay all that is made of clay is known, the modification [i.e., the visible effect consisting in a pot] being merely a name based on speech"), to show that nothing has any reality apart from it (2.1.14). Thus the ubiquity and unity of consciousness is established – for Brahman is *in essence* consciousness – without directly questioning the authority of the senses within their proper realm. Although the illusory character of diverse phenomena is ultimately implied, the dichotomy of self and world, the fact of perception, remains valid up to a point – the point, namely, where this inference is drawn, at which time the individual subject of consciousness disappears along with its perceived object. (Acknowledging this, Śaṅkara is able to uphold the relevance of *karma* and *upāsanā*, which

presuppose subject and object, as aids for attaining liberation until liberation actually emerges.) The model for this kind of idealism in the West is Fichte's philosophy, which envisions an Absolute Ego or pure consciousness at the basis of everything, immediately evolving into a finite I and a real world opposed to it. We term this "absolute idealism" in contrast to "subjective idealism", the type of idealism developed by Berkeley.[63] With this doctrine firmly grounded on scripture and supporting reasoning, Śaṅkara is able to turn completely against the (subjective) idealistic arguments associated with the Buddhists on which he once relied in establishing his system but now no longer needs. For the arguments themselves, he is convinced, have no inherent validity, nor, indeed, do the realist objections to them, except insofar as they serve to refute the heterodox view.

In conclusion, we can go along with Prof. Ingalls when he suggests in another article that Śaṅkara was not really a philosopher (but primarily a spiritual master intent on leading his disciples to liberation), if by that we mean he was not a rationalist.[64] Śaṅkara did not believe that reason by itself can get at the Truth. At the same time, we should not go too far in comparing him to the Buddha on this score. Śaṅkara was not altogether averse to engaging in philosophical dispute, while the Buddha apparently was. Indeed, Śaṅkara was a skilled polemicist, and his reliance on reason was mainly in that capacity. From his direct statements and from his procedure in other cases, one understands that Śaṅkara held the not unreasonable view that the truth is to be known through scripture, yielding an intuition. Once known, it is to be vigorously defended against the attacks of the rationalists, using the same weapons they use. It would be an interesting exercise to determine how far such a view coincides or conflicts with that of his contemporaries regarding philosophical controversy (*kathā*), perhaps subjecting his writings to an analysis in terms of the Nyāya categories of rhetoric: *vāda* (discussion), *jalpa* (sophistry), *vitaṇḍā* (cavil), and so on. (Śaṅkara is notoriously unscrupulous in interpreting the Veda to fit his own meaning; a complete assessment of his contribution to Indian thought would require that we judge whether he is unfair in his treatment of his philosophical opponents as well.) Further, it is possible and necessary to trace the origin of Śaṅkara's view in the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā theory of the eternality of language, on which the unassailable authority of the Veda is based.[65] But these topics must be left for future studies.

Since a systematic-philosophical approach to Śaṅkara's theory has been

adopted here, it remains to say a few words in evaluation of it. The correct response to Śaṅkara's misological attitude, I believe, was spelled out by Plato in the *Phaedo*. There he likens the hatred of reason (misology) to the hatred of men (misanthropy). Both arise in the same way, as the result of the repeated disappointment of faith uncritically placed in a thing. Plato emphasizes that one should not blame arguments for one's disappointment but oneself, for naively believing that one was in possession of a trustworthy argument when in fact none was there. Just because we are unable to discover a valid argument with regard to a certain matter does not mean no such arguments exist, any more than one's inability to find an honest man means there are no honest men.[66] From this point of view I think Śaṅkara's claim that reason is without foundation (*apratiṣṭhita*) is itself without foundation. On the other hand, as we saw, his rejection of reason does not rest solely on this point, nor does he reject it *in toto*. In emphasizing philosophical relativity Śaṅkara may well have had a practical rather than a strictly logical point in mind: that rational argument goes on almost endlessly until a conclusion is reached, and the goal of liberation may be thereby missed because one never gets around to it.[67] This would bring Śaṅkara closer to the Buddha, who in the famous story thought Mālunkyaputta would die before his curiosity about philosophical matters could be exhausted. It also brings us back round to St. Thomas Aquinas, who states that reasoning must be supplemented by scripture in particular because not all men are disposed by temperament to learn of God in that way, nor do all those who would do so have the ability, and those who have the ability scarcely succeed after a long time.[68]

In this paper the attempt has been made to tie together apparently discrepant aspects of Śaṅkara's thought by showing them to be ramifications of a single idea, an idea to which he himself gives emphatic expression. This method, which may be called the "internal" approach, is in contrast to various "external" explanations that can and have been offered for Śaṅkara's changing colors on philosophical issues: that his ideas are strictly determined by the text he is commenting on at the time; that an ulterior motive is often at work – such as, in the case of the problem of idealism, the need to defend himself against the charge of being a crypto-Buddhist. My contention is that both approaches must be pursued simultaneously (although certain investigators will naturally be inclined to take one approach rather than the other). It may be that Śaṅkara is slavishly orthodox in many of his

interpretations and that motives depending on historical circumstances determined him to ally himself with one school rather than another. But if we fail to see the internal coherence of his ideas despite this – a coherence which perhaps does not derive from Śaṅkara himself, but goes back to the texts he is commenting on – then we have missed something extremely important, *the fertile ideological ground that makes it possible for such factors to operate.* It is in any case wrong to proclaim that Śaṅkara's writings do not constitute a *system* – which arouses the zeal of those who love to find 'layers' in texts – before an earnest attempt has been made to interpret them systematically.[69] As for the statement that a truly accurate assessment of a philosopher such as Śaṅkara can not be made until critical editions of his works are available, this is a truism indeed.[70] But that is no more a valid reason to postpone the creative philosophical discussion of Śaṅkara's ideas than the absence of an up-to-date, critical edition of the New Testament is a valid reason not to pursue theology. Indian philosophy, even at the present early stage in our understanding of it, suggests to some persons crucial metaphysical and theological issues that demand answers whether they are ultimately to be judged the actual ideas of the philosophers of ancient times or not.

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NOTES

[1] A version of this paper was read at the American Oriental Society, Midwest Branch, meeting at Cincinnati, February, 1980.

[2] Paul Hacker, "Śaṅkara der Yogin und Śaṅkara der Advaitin. Einige Beobachtungen," *Beiträge zur Geistesgeschichte Indiens. Festschrift für Erich Frauwallner*, (ed.), G. Oberhammer (Vienna, 1968) (= *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 12–13 [1968–69]), 119–148; also, "Vedānta-Studien: 1. Bemerkungen zum Idealismus Śaṅkaras," *Die Welt des Orients* 3 (1948), 240–249.

[3] Hacker (1968), p. 135.

[4] Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Śaṃkara on the Question: Whose is Avidyā?" *Philosophy East and West* 3, No. 1 (1953), 69–72.

[5] Tilmann Vetter, "Zur Bedeutung des Illusionismus bei Śaṅkara," *Festschrift Frauwallner*, 407–423.

[5a] This material has been dealt with previously, with different purposes in view, by: Olivier Lacombe, *L'absolu selon le Védânta* (Paris: 1937), pp. 218–224; Hajime Nakamura, "A Conflict between Traditionalism and Rationalism: a Problem with Śaṃkara," *Philosophy East and West* 12, No. 2 (1962), 153–162; and, most recently, Shlomo Biderman, "Scriptures, Revelation and Reason," in Ben-Ami Scharfstein, et. al., *Philosophy East/Philosophy West: a critical comparison of Indian, Chinese, Islamic and*

European philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 128–161.

[6] The so-called *utsūtra*-criterion proposed by Hacker, However, must be kept in mind. If Śaṅkara gives more than a mere paraphrase of the text he is commenting on, he may well be presenting his own view. If, on the other hand, his comment does not go beyond that of a paraphrase, he may be "practising a supple adaptation indicative at once of his respect for the authority of the text and his reserve toward individual opinions stated in it" ("Notes on the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad and Śaṅkara's Āgamaśāstravivaraṇa," *India Major. Congratulation Volume Presented to Jan Gonda*, (ed.), J. Ensink and P. Gaeffke [Leiden, 1972], p. 115). Of course, Śaṅkara may have in many cases felt an extensive discussion of a text *with which he fundamentally agreed* was inappropriate, since its meaning was already, in his opinion, adequately clarified by tradition. Thus Hacker's criterion is not a *necessary* condition for Śaṅkara's positive affirmation of a doctrine (although it is a safe rule of thumb). At the same time it is not a *sufficient* criterion. Śaṅkara may, even in his longer independent philosophical discussions, have been the (willing or unwilling) heir of ideas from a weighty commentatorial tradition before him. Ingalls gives evidence of this with regard to Śaṅkara's arguments against the Buddhists in the BrSūBh, many of which closely resemble those presented by Bhāskara in his *Brahma Sūtra* commentary and therefore probably stem from a proto-commentator (see "Śaṃkara's Arguments Against the Buddhists," *Philosophy East and West* 3, No. 4 [1954], 291–306). The passages of the BrSūBh to be dealt with in the present study are extensive *utsūtra* discussions which go well beyond the ideas indicated in Bhāskara's work.

[7] Śaṅkara does not make a technical distinction in this discussion between *tarka* and *anumāna* in the Naiyāyika sense. He employs *tarka* generally to include *anumāna*. I shall, accordingly, render the term *tarka* variously as "logic", "logical argument", "reason", etc., *anumāna* more specifically as "inference".

[8] *vedāntavākyakusumagrathanārthatvāt sūtrāṇām. vedāntavākyāni hi sūtrair udāhṛtya vicāryante. vakyārthavicāraṇādhyavasānanirvṛttā hi brahmāvagatiḥ, nānumānādi-pramāṇāntaranirvṛttā. satsu tu vedāntavākyeṣu jagato janmādikaraṇavādiṣu tadartha-grahaṇadārḍhyāyānumānam api vedāntavākyāvirodhi pramāṇam bhavan na nivāryate.* ... *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣyam*, ed. Nārāyan Rām Āchārya (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara, 1948), pp. 7, 24–8, 2. The translation of G. Thibaut has been consulted: *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with the Commentary of Śaṅkara* (1890–96; rpt. New York: Dover, 1962).

[9] *na dharmajijñāsāyām iva śrutyādaya eva pramāṇam brahmajijñāsāyām, kiṃtu śrutyādayo 'nubhavādayaś ca yathāsaṃbhavam iha pramāṇam; anubhavāvasānatvād bhūtavastuviṣayatvāc ca brahmajñānasya*. BrSūBh 1.1.2, p. 8, 5–8.

[10] BrSūBh 1.1.2, p. 8, 19–26.

[11] This suggestion may derive from Dharmakīrti. See G. Oberhammer, "Der Gottesbeweis in der indischen Philosophie," *Numen* 12 (1965), pp. 12–14.

[12] BrSūBh 2.1.4, 6, 11, 13.

[13] Among these are *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* I.2.9, "This idea, my dear, is not to be acquired by logic, only stated by another [is it conducive to] sound knowledge," *naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā proktānyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭha; Bhagavad Gītā* II.25, "It is called unmanifest, unthinkable, unchanging," *avyakto 'yam acintyo 'yam avikāryo'yam ucyate.*

[14] *yad api śravaṇavyatirekeṇa mananaṃ vidadhac chabda eva tarkam apy ādartavyaṃ darśayatīty uktam. nānena miṣeṇa śuṣkatarkasyātmalābhaḥ saṃbhavati. śrutyanugṛhīta eva hy atra tarko 'nubhavāṅgatvenāśrīyate*. BrSūBh 2.1.6, pp. 188, 20–189, 1.

[15] *svapnāntabuddhāntayor ubhayor itaretaravyabhicārād ātmano 'nanvāgatatvaṃ, samprasāde ca prapañcaparityāgena sadātmanā saṃpatter niṣprapañcasadātmatvaṃ,*

prapañcasya brahmaprabhavatvāt kāryakāraṇānyatvaṇyāyena brahmāvyatireka ity evaṃjātīyakaḥ. BrSūBh 2.1.5, p. 189, 1–4.

16 *api ca saṃyagjñānān mokṣa iti sarveṣāṃ mokṣavādinām abhyupagamaḥ. tac ca saṃyagjñānam ekarūpam; vastutantratvāt. ekarūpeṇa hy avasthito yo 'rthaḥ sa paramārthaḥ. loke tadviṣayaṃ jñānaṃ saṃyagjñānam ity ucyate, yathāgnir uṣṇa iti. tatraivam sati saṃyagjñāne puruṣāṇāṃ vipratipattir anupapannā. tarkajñānānāṃ tv anyonyavirodhāt prasiddha vipratipattiḥ. . . . vedasya tu nityatve vijñānotpattihetutve ca sati vyavasthitārthaviṣayatvopapatteḥ, tajjanitasya jñānasya saṃyaktvam atītānāgata-vartamānaiḥ sarvair api tarkikair apahnotum aśakyam. ataḥ siddham asyaivaupaniṣadasya jñānasya saṃyagjñānatvam*. BrSūBh 2.1.11, pp. 193, 24–194, 13.

17 The objections by the opponent (2.1.11) that Śaṅkara himself employs reasoning in rejecting reasoning, and that scriptural conflicts must be arbitrated by reason, are not denied. When he says, *yady api kvacid viṣaye tarkasya pratiṣthitatvam upalakṣyate, tathāpi prakṛte tāvad viṣaye prasajyata anirmokṣaḥ*. . . , he is apparently referring to these matters. See further BrSūBh 2.1.13 where it is suggested (again, in the *pūrvapakṣa*) that in areas where other *pramāṇas* do properly apply, scripture should be secondary. Logic is unfounded only outside its proper realm: *yadyapi śrutiḥ pramāṇaṃ svaviṣaye bhavati, tathāpi pramāṇāntareṇa viṣayāpahāre 'nyaparā bhavitum arhati. . . . tarko 'pi svaviṣayād anyatrāpratiṣthitaḥ syāt*. . . . p. 195, 7–10.

18 BrSūBh 2.1.11, p. 193, 23–24. According to Advaita Vedānta, Brahman is devoid of all properties.

19 *Summa Theologica* QI, Art. 1, trans. by A. Pegis, *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1945).

20 Loc. cit.

21 Ibid. QII, Art. 2.

22 Loc. cit.

23 *Kenopaniṣat Śrīmacchaṅkarācāryakṛtapadavākyabhāṣyābhyāṃ tathā Śrīraṅgarā-mānujakṛtaprakāśikayā ca sametā* (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1919), *Vākyabhāṣya* III.1, pp. 27–32. On the authenticity of the *Vākyabhāṣya* see S. Mayeda, "Śaṅkara's Authorship of the Kenopaniṣadbhāṣya," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 10, No. 1 (1967), 33–35.

24 *Summa Theologica* QII, Art. 2. See also, QXII, Art. 12.

25 BrSūBh 1.1.1, p. 6, 9–13. See also BrSūBh 2.3.7, p. 268, 10–14.

26 BrSūBh 1.1.1, p. 6, 15.

27 *Vākyabhāṣya* III.1, p. 29.

28 *Summa Theologica* QXII, Art. 4.

29 *The Summa Contra Gentiles*, (ed. and trans.), The English Domenican Fathers (London: 1924), p. 9.

30 This is the basic assumption underlying the view at BrSūBh 1.1.4, in particular (e.g., p. 21, 15–25). Only in later Advaita works do we encounter the beginnings of an epistemology to account for the possibility of *mokṣa*. See, e.g., *The Vedāntasāra*, (ed.), M. Hiriyanna (Poona, 1962), pp. 11–12. For discussion see L. Schmithausen, "Zur Advaitischen Theorie der Objekterkenntnis," *Festschrift Frauwallner*, 229–260.

31 See R. de Smet, "Langage et connaissance de l'Absolu chez Çaṃkara," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 52 (1954), 31–74.

32 *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad Ānandagirikṛtaṭīkāsaṃvalitaśāṅkarabhāṣyasametā. Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series* No. 15 (1891), III.9.28.7, pp. 496–501.

33 *naiṣa doṣaḥ. śabdaprāmāṇyād bhaved vijñānam ānandaviṣayam. vijñānam ānandam ityādīni ānandasvarūpasyāsaṃvedyatve 'nupapannāni vacanāni. . . . nanu vacanenāpy*

agneḥ śaityam udakasya cauṣṇyaṃ na kriyata eva. jñāpakatvād vacanānām. na ca deśāntare 'gniḥ śīta iti śakyate jñāpayitum. Ibid., pp. 497, 11–498, 1.
[34] Ibid., p. 498, 8–9.
[35] Ibid., p. 499, 3–4.
[36] See note 17.
[37] Bṛh. Up. Bh. III.9.28.7, p. 497, 3–4.
[37a] Thus Śaṅkara says, BrSūBh 2.2.33, p. 253, 5–6, in opposition to a Jain position: *na hy ekasmin dharmiṇi yugapat sadasattvādiviruddhadharmasamāveśaḥ saṃbhavati, śītoṣṇavat.* In the text we are considering this example seems to indicate also that the Veda cannot deny the validity of other *pramāṇas*, "perception, etc." (*pratyakṣādi-*), in general.
[38] "Letter to Mersenne, Apr. 15, 1630," *Descartes. Philosophical Letters*, (trans. and ed.), A. Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).
[39] Hacker (1968), p. 120.
[40] Vetter (1968), p. 417. After citing a rejection by Kumārila of the authenticity of Yoga experience, Vetter goes on to say that "Śaṅkara beim Schreiben des BrSūBh entweder mit einer Tradition zu tun bekam, die nur für realistische Argumente zugänglich war, oder in seiner persönlichen Entwicklung an einen Punkt kam, wo ihn die intellektuelle Ehrlichkeit dazu zwang, sich von einer Welt der Erfahrung zu distanzieren, an der er offensichtlich keinen Teil hatte (beides braucht sich nicht auszuschliessen)."
[41] Also called the *Gauḍapādīya Kārikā Bhāṣya* and the *Āgamaśāstravivaraṇa.* On Śaṅkara's authorship see S. Mayeda, "On the Author of the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad- and the Gauḍapādīya-Bhāṣya," *Adyar Library Bulletin* 31–32 (1967–68), 73–94.
[42] See Vetter (1968), pp. 409f.
[43] *Sagauḍapādīyakārikātharvavedīyamāṇḍūkyopaniṣad Ānandagirikṛtaṭīkāsaṃvalita-śāṅkarabhāṣyasametā. Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series* No. 10 (1936), II.1, p. 65.
[44] MKBh III.1, p. 103.
[45] MKBh IV.1, p. 156.
[46] See especially MKBh III.13, p. 118, 6–8: When the non-difference of the individual soul and the self is praised (*praśasyate*) and multiplicity reviled (*nindyate*), "that is what is fitting [,that is,] right knowledge that is proper (*samañjasam ṛjvavabodhaṃ nyāyyam*). But the false, distorted views of the logicians do not have effect when they are investigated (*nirūpyamāṇā na ghaṭanām prāñcanti*)," i.e., they do not lead to liberation.
[47] *vigatadoṣair eva paṇḍitair vedāntārthatatparaiḥ sanyāsibhiḥ paramātmā draṣṭum śakyo nānyair rāgādikaluṣitacetobhiḥ svapakṣapātidarśanais tārkikādibhiḥ.* . . . MKBh II.35, p. 99, 1–2.
[48] *na tārkikaparikalpitātmavat puruṣabuddhipramāṇagamyaḥ.* . . . MKBh III.11, p. 116, 12.
[49] If the cause itself is born from something else, we have a regress.
[50] See especially IV.3–5, where Śaṅkara identifies the dualists as the Sāṃkhyas on one side and the Vaiśeṣikas and Naiyāyikas on the other. The *satkāryavāda* is attacked at length at IV.11–22, also II.19–22. The Vaiśeṣika view receives less attention, but is apparently referred to also at III.28.
[51] MKBh IV.28, p. 177, 20–21.
[52] Loc. cit.
[53] . . . *dvaitino 'py ete 'nyonyasya pakṣau sadasator janmanī pratiṣedhanto ajātim anutpattim arthāt khyāpayanti.* . . . *tair evaṃ khyāpyamānām ajātim evam astv iti*

anumodāmahe kevalaṃ, na tair . . . vivadāmaḥ. . . . MKBh IV.4–5, pp. 159–160. This is a close gloss of the *kārikā* text.

[54] Cf. *Nyāyabhāṣya* IV.2.35.

[55] MKBh II.32, pp. 82–83. My interpretation follows Ānandagiri's *ṭīkā*.

[56] See note 25.

[56a] At MKBh III.27 Śaṅkara provides another argument in favor of his position: We are able to infer the reality of the self from its effect – the origination of the world – as we are able to infer the existence of a magician from the illusion he creates. This argument is analogous to St. Thomas' second way of proving God's existence (ST QII, Art. 3), which is notoriously problematic.

[57] A similar transition occured when Buddhism was introduced in China. See R. Gimello, "Apophatic and Kataphatic Discourse in Mahayana," *Philosophy East and West* 26, No. 2 (1976), 117–136.

[58] See E. Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan, 1967), pp. 252f.

[59] BrSūBh 2.2.28–32.

[60] The realist argument in the BrSūBh *siddhānta* that external objects are perceived as *objects* of perception (*upalabdhiviṣayatvenaiva*), not as *perceptions* (BrSūBh 2.2.28, p. 248, 7–16), is echoed at MKBh IV.24: consciousness has a [n external] cause (*sanimittatva*), it has an object distinct from itself (*svātmavyatiriktaviṣayatā*). But in the MKBh this occurs as a *pūrvapakṣa*, to be subsequently set aside in favor of the idealist point of view. The realist thesis put forward in the BrSūBh that the impossibility of external objects cannot be maintained in the face of their actual perception (BrSūBh 2.2.28, p. 248, 23–27), urged against an idealist claim for which we find a close parallel in the MKBh (see above, p. 294), can be taken as no more than subborn insistence on the same point. The realist argument of the BrSūBh that the distinction of the idea of a cloth from that of a pot is due to a difference in the objects of consciousness rather than in consciousness itself (like the difference between a white cow and a black cow is a difference in color, not cow-ness) (BrSūBh 2.2.28, p. 249, 5–9) is contained in the thought of MKBh IV.24: *na hi prajñapteḥ prakāśamātrasvarūpāyā nīlapītādibāhyalambanavaicitryam antareṇa svabhāvabhedenaiva vaicitryaṃ saṃbhavati. sphuṭikasyeva nīlādyupādhyāśrayair vinā vaicitryaṃ na ghaṭate. . . .* (p. 173, 13–15). Again, this idea is presented in the MKBh in the *pūrvapakṣa*, only to be later cast out. The point at BrSūBh 2.2.29 that waking experiences are not like dream experiences because dreams are contradicted by waking (therefore false) is made as if in direct – and arbitrary – opposition to the position of MKBh II.7: waking experiences are contradicted by *dreams*. Thus no new philosophical insights about this dispute guide the transition from the MKBh to the BrSūBh. In the BrSūBh the same arguments in support of realism are presented as in the MKBh, with the only difference that they are now seen to refute those same idealist arguments by which they were themselves, in the MKBh, considered refuted! Those ideas contained in Śaṅkara's polemic against the Buddhists in the BrSūBh to which Ingalls refers as innovations (Ingalls [1954]) are discussed by Ingalls as original contributions of Śaṅkara to the tradition of *Brahma Sūtra* exegesis (not as changes in his own beliefs), and have to do primarily with refinements in the criticism of the Vijñānavāda. But Śaṅkara rejects the Vijñānavāda in both the BrSūBh and the MKBh. (The realism of the BrSūBh is clearly opposed to Vijñānavāda idealism, and in the MKBh Śaṅkara tries to work out a *non-Buddhistic* version of idealism.) Such innovations,

therefore, cannot count as factors that could have swayed Śaṅkara away from the type of idealism he defends in the latter work.

60a As was noted, waking consciousness is vitiated not just by *samādhi* but also deep sleep, according to the MKBh (see p. 295)! But then, contrary to what Vetter seems to believe, the rejection of the authenticity of *samādhi* would not be sufficient by itself to save the validity of waking consciousness in that regard. Furthermore, in his refutation of idealism in the BrSūBh Śaṅkara, unlike Kumārila in his refutation of idealism, does not even mention *samādhi*. Such a discrepancy suggests that Śaṅkara, who knew Kumārila's work, and who was apparently not averse to employing any other arguments against idealism he encountered, intentionally chose not to use Kumārila's argument – perhaps for the very reason that it calls Yoga experience into question.

61 Yoga in some sense, at least, is retained as a preparation for enlightenment: J. Taber, *On the Relation of Philosophical Knowledge and Self-Experience in the Philosophies of Śaṅkara and J. G. Fichte. A Study in Transformative Philosophy*, dissertation, University of Hamburg, Germany, 1979.

62 Ingalls (1954), pp. 304f.

63 Among the German idealists Fichte is often referred to as a "subjective idealist", Hegel as an "absolute idealist", but only because Fichte thought one has direct access to the Absolute through the self, calling it "das absolute Ich". In his later works he renounces this subjective terminology. For a discussion of Fichte's philosophy in relation to Śaṅkara's, see J. Taber, op. cit.

64 Ingalls (1953).

65 Śaṅkara's discussion at BrSūBh 1.1.2 is clearly a continuation of one begun by Śabara. See E. Frauwallner, *Materialien zur ältesten Erkenntnislehre der Karmamīmāṃsā. Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse* 259, No. 2 (Vienna: Böhlaus, 1968), pp. 32–37.

66 *Phaedo*, 89c–91b.

67 This fits in well with the main concern of his comment at 2.1.11, which is "absence of release will ensue" (*avimokṣaprasaṅgaḥ*). But it is to be kept in mind that for Śaṅkara the attainment of Truth by rational means is impossible *in principle*. The practical idea, if it is there, is not clearly articulated. The fact that Śaṅkara does ultimately rest his case on the philosophical point that Brahman is beyond the senses shows indeed that he is more philosophically oriented than a thinker such as the Buddha.

68 *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.5, pp. 7–9.

69 Vetter makes such a claim in "Śaṅkaras 'System'," *Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* Suppl. III, No. 2 (1977), 1015–21.

70 Cf. W. Rau, "Bemerkungen zu Śaṅkaras Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya," *Padeuma. Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 7, Nos. 4–6 (1960), 294–299.

THE QUESTION OF DOCTRINALISM IN THE BUDDHIST EPISTEMOLOGISTS

RICHARD P. HAYES

> The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects; in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions may remain inviolate.
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> Francis Bacon (1561–1626)
> *Novum Organum* xlvi

Approximately one thousand years after the career of Śakyamuni Buddha, there arose in India a school of Buddhist philosophers whose putative interest was to set forth and describe the principles according to which beliefs may be deemed justifiable. Among the key figures in this movement were the philosophers Vasubandhu, Diṅnāga, Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. In the present paper I wish to deal with two closely related questions pertaining to these Buddhist epistemologists. First, I should like to examine the stances taken by some of them on the question of the authority of Buddhist scriptures (*āgama*); essentially what I hope to discover is whether these epistemologists regarded the body of Buddhist canonical writings as sources of knowledge as opposed to regarding them, for example, simply as objects of worship or as liturgical instruments used in the generation of religious merit and its attendant powers.[1] And second, I should like to look into the question of

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[1] Schopen has shown in at least two articles 1975 and 1982 the important role played by one cycle of Mahāyāna sūtras as cult objects, i.e., as collections of formulas which, if recited or copied or even if put into reliquaries and circumambulated, are supposed to generate incalculable quantities of religious merit. I do not entertain the slightest doubt that this putative capacity of sacred texts to generate religious merit is one of the principal uses to which

whether the Buddhist epistemologists should be characterized primarily as champions of reason or rather as champions of dogma. In posing this second question, what I hope to determine is whether the men in question were motivated primarily by the goal of trying impartially to determine a means of segregating knowledge from mere belief, or whether they were motivated by the more apologetic goal of trying to prove that the beliefs they held as Buddhists were true and justifiable while the beliefs of outsiders were unjustifiable dogmas. To state the problem in different terms, I should like to gain some insight into whether the principles evolved by these Buddhist epistemologists were seriously influenced by their partisanship to established Buddhist doctrines. Or was it rather the case that these men achieved—or tried to achieve—a nonpartisan logic, a set of epistemological principles that were doctrinally neutral in the way that, say, grammar is doctrinally neutral?

Let me put this question of the apologetic nature of the philosophers in question into an historical perspective. In the eleventh century—about five hundred years after the time of Diṅnāga—there began in Tibet one of several attempts to reestablish a more purely Indian form of Buddhism. This reform movement was carried out in part by sending scholars to India for the purpose of regaining contact with oral traditions that had become discontinued in Tibet during two centuries of political and social instability in that country. Among the oral traditions that had been lost was the logical tradition that had first been introduced into Tibet in the late eighth century by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, both professors at Nālandā university. By the eleventh century, however, it had become rather difficult to find Buddhist pandits in India; one or two were found in Kaśmir, but they had become Buddhists late in life, and for the rest the Tibetans had to make to with non-Buddhist scholars who had some knowledge of the works of the Buddhist thinkers of former centuries. Hence, all told, the rediscovery of Indian Buddhist epistemology in Tibet was achieved largely through the agency of non-Buddhists or of men who, though converts to Buddhism, had received most of their educations from non-Buddhist teachers. Looking back on this situation some one hundred years later, the great reformer of Tibetan Buddhism, Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1252), the Sa skya Paṇḍita, felt alarmed at how many "foreign elements" might have worked their way into the understanding of Buddhist logic and epistemology. And in order to rectify this undesirable situation, the renowned pandit of Sa skya monastery undertook to write an extensive account of what he called the root and branches of Buddhist logic and epistemology; the root was Diṅnāga's

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these texts are put in Buddhist religious practice; but what I do wonder is whether they are believed to serve some further purpose as well, such as the transmission of ordinarily unknowable truths and so forth.

Pramāṇasamuccaya and the seven branches were the seven logical treatises of Dharmakīrti, namely, *Pramāṇavārttika*, *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, *Nyāyabindu*, *Hetubindu*, *Sambandhaparīkṣā*, *Vādanyāya* and *Santānāntarasiddhi*. This new account of the root and seven branches was to be completely uncontaminated by any residual strains of Hindu doctrine.[2] Clearly, in twelfth century Tibet the notion of and desire for a Buddhist orthodoxy had arisen,[3] and the early Buddhist epistemologists came to be regarded among the mainstream of Tibetan intellectuals as champions of that orthodoxy, as men whose arguments could be counted on to rebuff the attacks that any outsider might make on established Buddhist doctrines.

The assumption that the Buddhist epistemologists had been primarily Buddhist apologists is not confined to twelfth-century Tibetan reformers. Modern historians of Indian thought such as Satkari Mookerjee, Stcherbatsky, D. N. Shastri, R. R. Dravid, C. L. Tripathi, and A. K. Warder have argued that a defense of Buddhist dogma was of central concern to the early epistemologists. Other twentieth-century scholars have argued that at least some of the Buddhist logicians of India had put doctrine in the background and were concerned primarily with refining the intellectual tools of logic and critical thinking rather than with furthering sectarian positions; among those who have argued some version

[2] This account of Sa skya paṇḍita's motives in writing his *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter* is given in an English introduction to Kun mkhyen Go rams pa Bsod nams Seng ge's (1429–1489) commentary thereto (1975 edition). Stcherbatsky, on the other hand, says (1932:46) that Sa skya paṇḍita "maintained that logic is an utterly profane science, containing nothing Buddhistic at all, just as medicine and mathematics are. The celebrated historian Bu-ston Rin-poche shares in the same opinion." Stcherbatsky goes on to say that, in contrast, the mainstream of the Dge lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism "acknowledges in Dharmakīrti's logic a sure foundation of Buddhism as a religion." A similar observation is made by van der Kuijp (1979), who says that Sa skya paṇḍita did not commit himself on the role of logic in Buddhism but that there were scholars of both the Sa skya pa order and the Dge lugs pa order who sought "to estabilsh the relationship between logic and the three spiritual courses" (7) and suggested "that logic leads to liberation" (23). Thus, even if the account I have given here of Sa skya paṇḍita's views should turn out not to be strictly accurate for him, it is nevertheless accurate for many prominent medieval Tibetan scholars such as Rgyal tshab dar ma rin chen (1364–1432), Bo dong pan chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451), Sa skya mchog ldan (1428–1507) and Bsod nams grags pa (1478–1554).

[3] Jackson (1982) argues convincingly that Sa skya paṇḍita's zeal to establish the views of his school as the true Buddhism and to discredit the theories and practices of his doctrinal rivals led the great reformer to a somewhat disingenuous retelling of history, introducing into his telling of the Bsam yas debate between Kamalaśīla and the Hva shang Mahāyāna a "polemical anachronism, an attempt to discredit the paṇḍita's contemporary opponents by associating them with an historical person of established notoriety" (96). A reading of the history of Buddhism in Tibet shows that a willingness to sacrifice accuracy in favor of orthodoxy was not just an idiosyncracy of Sa skya paṇḍita's; on the contrary, it was a general tendency among Tibetans to be very concerned with questions of orthodoxy.

of this position are Satischandra Vidyabhusana, M. Hattori, and Erich Frauwallner. The position that a scholar takes on this issue can make a great deal of difference in how he interprets particular passages in particular texts. For, clearly, if we insist that an ancient author was setting out to defend a specific set of doctrines, then there are very definite constraints placed upon what interpretation of ambiguous passages we are allowed to entertain. Moreover, if we claim to know exactly which dogmas an ancient author was defending, then we are also claiming to have a relatively reliable guide through difficult parts of his work, and we may also believe that we have a comparatively trustworthy criterion by which to decide whether works attributed to that author were truly his or whether they were mistakenly attributed to him by later tradition.[4] Unfortunately, as useful as it would be to have certainty with respect to an ancient author's preferred dogmas, we almost never do have it, and all too often the assumption that an ancient author was defending a certain dogma is not very well founded. The obvious danger of making gratuitous assumptions is that we may force interpretations upon an author that differ from or are even incompatible with his actual intentions. Moreover, in assuming that a particular author had an inflexible commitment to some particular set of dogmas, we run the risk of overlooking subtle changes in his views resulting from intellectual growth. For these reasons I regard it as essential to try to determine for each individual text written by a Buddhist epistemologist whether its author's primary goal was to advance a doctrinally neutral science or whether it was to provide an apology for a specific set of doctrines.

[4] A good illustration of this point can be found in various interpretations that have been given to the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, usually attributed to Diṅnāga. The majority of scholars have held a view like the one expressed by Tola and Dragonetti (1982:105): "The *Ālambanaparīkṣā* is one of the most important texts of Dignāga. This work and Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā* and *Triṃśikā* are basic fundamental texts of the Yogācāra school of Buddhism; in them we find expounded the principal philosophical tenets of the school, centered around the thesis of the sole existence of consciousness, the thesis of 'being as consciousness.'" Wayman (1979:70) agrees that the *Ālambanaparīkṣā* is a Yogācāra work by Diṅnāga but emphatically denies that the text argues that only consciousness exists: "The vulgar interpretation—that this denies external objects—is nonsense." Warder (1980) agrees that it is nonsense to interpret the *Ālambanaparīkṣā* as denying external objects, and he takes this as a sign that Diṅnāga was not a Yogācārin at all but rather a Sautrānika. Others—whose views have been expressed to me orally but who have not yet put them in print so far as I know—argue against Wayman that the *Ālambanaparīkṣā does* deny external objects, agree with Warder that Diṅnāga was a Sautrānika and conclude against tradition that Diṅnāga did not in fact write the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*. The stance that one takes on whether Diṅnāga was a Yogācārin who denied external objects, a Yogācārin who did not deny external objects or a Sautrānika can play a very important role in determining how one interprets some passages in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. A review of how various scholars have interpreted the fifth chapter of that text in the light of their conclusions regarding Diṅnāga's sectarian affiliations appears in Hayes (1981:1–27).

Obviously, in this paper I cannot examine more than a few passages in a few texts, but I hope that the passages I have chosen to discuss will be sufficiently representative of the authors in question to enable us to form tentative answers to the questions that I posed at the outset.

First, in order to put these discussions into perspective, I must lay down some historical and philosophical background to clarify what task the Indian epistemologists had set for themselves. Stated in its most general terms, the task of the epistemologist is to find a means of separating knowledge from mere belief. Knowledge is regarded as belief that is not only true but also justified. In other words, knowledge is belief that does not simply happen to be true but for which there is some well-considered set of criteria by appeal to which we can be relatively certain that it is true. So the task of the epistemologist is to try to find those criteria or standards against which we can measure our beliefs in order to determine which beliefs are relatively certain and which are not. There is obviously a great deal of room for controversy over the question of which criteria are competent to serve this purpose. One of the most controversial issues among the classical Indian epistemologists was over the question of whether revealed scripture (*āgama*) was capable in and of itself of justifying belief. This controversy actually involves a whole family of related questions, among the more important of which are the following: (1) If one believes some matter for no other reason than that the matter is proclaimed in scripture, is one's belief justified or not? (2) In case the information provided by scriptures conflicts with the information provided by direct experience or derived through reason, should we reject the scriptures, or should we rather doubt the reliability of the senses and the canons of logic? (3) If one does accept the possibility that scriptural traditions in general may be sources of knowledge, is it then possible to find a set of criteria that will establish one particular set of scriptures as a standard against which all others are to be measured? It is with this third question that the religious apologist is most likely to be concerned, for his task is usually to defend the authority of his own scriptural tradition and to show that whatever is incompatible with his scriptures must be false. But the impartial epistemologist must also concern himself with this question.

Let us first look at the arguments of some of the Hindu thinkers who defended the Vedic system of scriptures as a source of genuine knowledge as opposed to a source of mere belief. The strategies used to defend scripture varied somewhat from author to author and naturally increased in complexity through several centuries of debate, but to begin the discussion I shall restrict myself to an early line of defense that had currency in the third and fourth centuries C.E., since it was during this time that the earliest Buddhist epistemological writings occurred. This first defense that I shall look at is very simple indeed and it is to be found in

its essential form in both the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa (1967 edition, p. 45) and in Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* (1965 edition, pp. 30–31). Reduced to its bare structure, the argument goes like this: There are some beliefs that every sensible person has, such as a belief in the principle of karma with its underlying presupposition that every voluntary action is followed by its moral consequences that are either enjoyed in the present life or in some future existence. To this may be added the belief in divine beings, belief in the efficacy of religious rituals and practices, and belief in some final salvation in the form of a release from the cycle of rebirths. These beliefs are all well established in the minds of men, and yet they cannot be justified on the basis of ordinary experience or common inference. But they are discussed in scripture. Therefore, it is scripture and scripture alone that justifies our beliefs in matters outside the realm of what can be justified by ordinary means.

There are two aspects of the above argument that are particularly noteworthy. First is the point that it singles out a domain of objects concerning which the scriptures are said to have special authority, a domain of objects that are entirely unobservable and hence unknowable by any means other than the scriptures themselves. As we shall see, this domain of ultrasensibles (*atīndriyāṇi*) plays a key role in most of the Indian discussions on the authority of scripture. In the discussions that follow, I shall refer to the domain of ultrasensibles in general, but here it may be mentioned that among the items to be included in that domain by various philosophers were such things as the following: God; the unobservable characteristics by virtue of which a person belongs to his caste; the gender of apparently sexless objects that are nevertheless named by masculine or feminine nouns in Sanskrit; the cause of the capacity of magnets to attract iron; the cause of motion in atoms; and the continuity from one rebirth to another of a single integrated collection of moral consequences regarded as belonging to just one individual sentient being. Generally speaking it was to this realm of ultrasensibles that the philosophers assigned all items of common belief for which no suitable empirical account could be found. And virtually all philosophers, except for the nihilistic Cārvākas whose views were despised by all religious thinkers, accepted the notion that some things do exist which have effects in the empirical world but which are themselves ultrasensible; the principal disagreements among philosophers concerned the specific occupants of the realm of ultrasensible existent things.

The second noteworthy aspect of the above argument is that it proceeds by a form of circular reasoning consisting in predetermining that some beliefs—namely, those that are commonly believed within a specific community—are true and then asserting that whatever states those beliefs—namely, scriptures—is thereby a source of truth. As we shall see, it was difficult for any of the defenders of any of the scriptural traditions

in India to avoid this vicious circularity.

Brief mention has already been made of the strictly empirical Cārvākas, who denied that it was possible to have any certainty at all of things that lay beyond the realm of the senses of ordinary mortals. Since some of the Buddhist epistemologists evidently endorsed Cārvākan lines of argument against the authority of Hindu scriptures while nevertheless defending the principle that some knowledge of ultrasensible things is possible, it is worth sketching out the Cārvākan position in somewhat greater detail before discussing the views of the Buddhist epistemologists. The Cārvākas were decidedly strident in their criticisms of those who accepted the Vedic scriptures as sources of knowledge. The chief weakness of the Vedas in the Cārvākan view was precisely that feature which in Bhartṛhari's view provided their greatest strength, namely, the fact that the Vedas dealt with matters for which there could never be any independent verification. In other words, they dealt with ultrasensible things, and for the Cārvāka believing in unltrasensible things was as irrational as believing in the truth of dreams or delirious visions. Moreover, claimed the Cāravākas, the Vedas were full of contradictions, and even the believers could never agree among themselves which passages had higher priority in cases of inconsistency. Therefore, although we mortals have no way of verifying any Vedic statements about the ultrasensible, we can at least be certain from the presence of contradictions that some Vedic statements must be false. But if the reciters of the Vedas transmitted any false statements at all, then they lose their authority altogether, for we can never place our trust in speakers who are known to bear false witness, whether by deliberate deception or honest errors. And, finally, say the Cārvākas, we have every reason to mistrust the transmitters of Vedic texts, because these men have a vested interest in encouraging our belief in all their ultrasensible fictions; it is quite plain to see that the more we believe in the intangible benefits alleged to accrue to those who sponsor the performance of rituals prescribed in the Vedas, the more money flows to the priests who perform these religious services. In the final analysis, the Cārvākan felt safe in dismissing the Vedas as "nothing more than the gibberish of charlatans" (*dhūrtapralāpamātra*), the outpourings of "crafty hypocrites proclaiming themselves holy" (*vaidikammanya dhūrtabaka*) (Mādhava, 1906 edition, p. 2). In this deluge of vituperative rhetoric, the Cārvākas did hit upon two issues that demanded attention from the defenders of scripture: (1) the question of the integrity of those who revealed and transmitted scripture, and (2) the question of logical consistency as a necessary condition for credibility.

One final bit of background information to consider before dealing with the Buddhist epistemologists concerns the Brahmanical response to the Cārvākan attack on their scriptures; for, as we shall see, the Buddhist defenses of their own scriptures were identical in form to the Hindu defenses of the Vedas. Let us take up the two Cārvākan points of criticism

in turn. First, in reply to the Cārvākan accusation that the Vedas were logically inconsistent, the Brahmanical philosophers Gotama, Vātsyāyana Pakṣilasvāmin and Bharadvāja Uddyotakara of the Nyāya school claimed that careful reading of the scriptural passages in their proper contexts would show that all seeming inconsistencies were only apparent. That people found inconsistencies in the scriptures was only a reflection of the superficiality of their knowledge of scriptures rather than a reflection of real flaws in the scriptures themselves; but those people who carefully studied the scriptures in all their enormous complexity according to well-established principles of exegesis (*mīmaṁsā*) could avoid the mistakes committed by untutored investigators. Second, in reply to the Cārvākan accusation that the priestly transmitters of the Vedas were selfserving hypocrites interested only in increasing their own wealth, the early Nyāya philosophers advanced the counterclaim that the original authors of the scriptures had well-established credentials not only as men with good intentions but also as men with adequate knowledge to accomplish their good intentions, for the authors of scriptures were exactly the same men as those who had been the authors of the Atharvāveda, the earliest collection of charms and spells for healing and other practical benefits. In their role as medical practitioners and physical healers these men had known what people must do in order to be physically well, and because they wished to work for the wellbeing of others, they instructed those who would not otherwise have access to such knowledge on what they must do to be healthy. And following these teachings led to tangible results. Similarly, in their capacity as authors of the other three Vedas, these same sages had known what people must do in order to be spiritually well, and they had altruistically informed others of what those others would not otherwise know. If these sages had proven trustworthy in all matters where we can test their claim against our own experiences, then, say the Nyāya authors, it is perfectly reasonable to expect them to be trustworthy also in all other matters in which they claim expertise, even if those matters are for us ultrasensible. So according to these early Nyāya writers the Vedas are competent to justify beliefs concerning ultrasensible realities—on this point they agree with Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Bhartṛhari. But where Gotama, Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara differ is that for them the authority of the Veda derives not from the mere fact that these scriptures proclaim beliefs that every pious man wishes to be true, but rather from the fact that these scriptures were written by trustworthy persons (*āpta*), a trustworthy person being someone who knows what people must do in order to achieve a specified result and is motivated by his altruism to inform others of what is truly beneficial for them. The Vedas, according to this principle, are not necessarily different in kind from any other body of literature composed by well-intentioned experts.

Given the foregoing review of the stances taken by the early medieval Hindu philosophers and their critics on the capacity of scriptures to yield genuine knowledge, we now have a context in which to examine the stances taken by the Buddhist epistemologists on the authority of the Hindu and Buddhist scriptural traditions. A natural place to begin this phase of our investigation is with the writing of Vasubandhu (ca. 400–ca. 480 C.E.), who is credited with writing not only an encyclopedic work on Buddhist dogmatics from the perspective of the Vaibhāṣika school of Kaśmir, and two influential treatises outlining the essence of the Mahāyānistic Yogācāra school, but also two elementary tracts on logic and epistemology.[5] Some of Vasubandhu's attitudes towards the Buddhist scriptures are articulated in his masterpiece, the *Abhidharmakośa* (Treasury of Dogmatics). In this work Vasubandhu states explicitly that there is no means of attaining salvation other than through the accurate discrimination of pure and impure characteristics (i.e., personality traits), for it is only when one has correctly understood which characteristics are beneficial and which are malignant that one can cultivate the good aspects of one's character and eradicate the bad. And the purpose of engaging in the systematic study of the Buddha's teaching is to help develop this capacity for accurate discrimination. The study of other systems of thought than Buddhism, says Vasubandhu, fails to lead to salvation, because other systems are vitiated by erroneous views, and acting in accordance with misconceptions is bound to be counterproductive.[6] Since Vasubandhu places such a high premium on the necessity of following the true religion in order to attain salvation, it is naturally incumbent upon him to address the issue of whether the Buddha's religion is indeed the true one and whether he, Vasubandhu, has given the correct account of the Buddha's religion. His answer occurs in the final paragraphs of the *Abhidharmakośa* (1973 edition, pp. 1185–8). Let me first provide a translation of these paragraphs *in extenso* and then offer some brief observations on them:

> But how long will the true religion, in which these types of [pure and impure] characteristics are accurately discriminated, endure?

[5] Frauwallner (1961) attributes to this Vasubandhu authorship of the Vaibhāṣika textbook *Abhidharmakośa*, the Yogācārin *Viṁśatikā* and *Triṁśikā Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, and the two logical texts *Vādavidhi* and *Vādavidhāna*. The real founder of the epistemological school of Buddhism, Diṅnāga (ca. 480–ca. 540), based many of his writings on these works of Vasubandhu; for example, he wrote a commentary to the *Abhidharmakośa*, summarized Vasubandhu's Yogācārin works in his *Ālambanaparikṣā*, and took Vasubandhu's logical texts as the point of departure for his earliest logical writings.

[6] See, for example, *Abhidharmakośa* (1973 edition, p. 1189): "kiṁ khalv ato'nyatra mokṣo nāsti? nāsti. kiṁ kāraṇam? vitathātmadṛṣṭiniviṣṭatvāt." Is there no salvation elsewhere (than in Buddhism)? There is not. Why? Because (other teachings) are dedicated to the mistaken belief in an individual self.

> The true religion of the Teacher is of two forms, namely, that which is embodied in scripture (*āgama*) and that which is embodied in technique (*adhigama*). Scripture in this context means the sermons of the Buddha, the books of discipline and the catechisms (*sūtra-vinaya-abhidharma*); technique means those things that conduce to enlightenment. These are the two aspects of the true religion. And the only preservers thereof are those who expound it and those who practice it, for expounders preserve the scriptures and practitioners preserve the technique. Therefore, know that as long as expounders and practitioners exist, so will the true religion. But it has been said that such people will be on hand for one millennium [after the Buddha]; others say that the technique will endure for a millennium, but the scriptures will endure for a greater length of time.
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> Is the catechism expounded in the present treatise the same as the one that the Teacher set forth? For the most part I have expounded the catechism established in the teachings of the Vaibhāṣika school of Kaśmir. . . . Whatever I have misunderstood here is my own fault. For only Buddhas and their direct disciples are authoritative in teaching the true religion. Now that our Teacher is dead, the eyes of the world are closed, and now that the majority of those who had firsthand experience [of the truths he taught] have met their ends, his teaching, which is being transmitted by those who have not seen reality and have not gained freedom [from their passions and misconceptions] and are inept at reasoning, has gotten all mixed up. . . . So, those who desire salvation, seeing that the Buddha's teaching is gasping its last breaths . . . must not become distracted.

According to my understanding of this passage, Vasubandhu has done a very clever job of striking a balance between two potentially incompatible views. For on the one hand he has denied that the scriptures *as we now understand them* are fully authoritative; that is to say, we cannot place full confidence in the scriptural tradition anymore, because the scriptures require interpretation and hardly anyone still exists who is competent to provide the requisite interpretation. But, on the other hand, by placing the blame for the current nonauthority of scriptures on the imperfections of teachers like himself, Vasubandhu salvages the view that the Buddha himself was a source of knowledge. He was a source of truth to which we now have imperfect access. Therefore, the purely religious value of the Buddha as an object of veneration and as a model of humanly attainable perfectibility is upheld by Vasubandhu. Moreover, he maintains this religious desideratum without also maintaining the encumberments and limitations of a commitment to a stagnating scripture as a standard of truth. When one recalls that for Vasubandhu, writing nearly a millennium after the Buddha's death, many passages of scripture would seem almost as outmoded and incomprehensible as they now seem to us, it must have been desirable not to

be bound to scripture.[7] As we shall see, variants of Vasubandhu's approach to discarding a bondage to scripture without discarding his veneration for the Buddha can be found in several of the epistemological Buddhists. Similarly, many of the epistemologists followed his lead in dealing with the problem of how, given the fact that one cannot automatically place full confidence in any one interpretation of scripture, we are to test the worthiness of a teaching that purports to be Buddhist. Vasubandhu's answer to this problem is suggested in the ninth chapter of the *Abhidharmakośa*, where he repudiates some of the views put forth by the Vātsīputrīya school of Buddhism, who did, incidentally, claim to have scriptural authority for some of their apparently unorthodox views; these Vātsīputrīya teachings are to be rejected, says Vasubandhu, because they are not verified by our own direct experience, and because they cannot stand up in the light of reasoning that is ultimately grounded in our own experience. And thus, in the final analysis, Vasubandhu follows the principle that it is only experience and sound argumentation grounded in experience that can yield knowledge.

The next Buddhist epistemologist that I wish to examine is Diṅnāga, who is traditionally seen as the figurehead of the Nyāyānusārin Buddhist movement; as its name implies, this movement put reliance on reasoning rather than on scripture and is traditionally contrasted with the Āgamānusārin (relying on scripture) schools. The Nyāyānusārin movement included adherents of both the Sautrāntika and the Yogācārin schools of thought. In Diṅnāga's most extensive treatise on logic and epistemology, the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, there are several passages that indicate his attitudes towards the question of the authoritativeness of scriptures in general and his attitudes towards Brahmanical and Buddhist scriptures in particular. For example, in the first chapter of that work we find an indication that Diṅnāga entertained a degree of suspicion towards scriptures in general. In the passage in question he is discussing the direct experience of reality that can be developed through mental discipline. That experience consists, says Diṅnāga, in observing things just as they are with an observation that is entirely free of preconceptions arising from the instructions of one's teachers and with an observation that is wholly disencumbered of preconceptions derived from scriptures (*āgama*).[8] The teachings of scriptures, whether they be the words of the

[7] The Mahāyānists, whom Vasubandhu eventually endorsed, gained their freedom from outdated scriptures by "finding" new ones to update and supplement the older ones. This practical solution was adopted in Tibet, especially by the Rnying ma pa sect, which places great confidence in *gter ma*, that is, "discovered treasures" consisting of texts supposedly hidden in ancient times to be found when the time for the new teachings became ripe. An account of this school is available in Li (1948), Dargyay (1977), and Hoffman.

[8] *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1.6cd reads: "yogināṁ gurunirdeśāvyatibhinnārthamātradṛk. yoginām apy āgamavikalpāvyavakīrṇam arthamātradarśanam pratyakṣam." It is quoted

Buddha or the words of the Vedic seers, flavor our experiences of the world around us and predigest the information that we acquire through our senses, and in so doing they form an obstacle to our experiencing things as they really are. The purpose of mental discipline, suggests Diṅnāga, is to enable us to surpass those barriers put in our way by those who have instructed us. What is particularly noteworthy about these comments is that they are applied to *all* scriptural authority, including, one supposes, the entire range of Buddhist teachings.

A second passage that indicates Diṅnāga's attitudes towards traditional teachings is to be found in the third chapter of his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. In this passage the topic under discussion is what characterizes a genuine assertion in the context of an argument with another party. An assertion in an argument can be entertained, says Diṅnāga, if "the person advancing the argument himself believes it and it is not overthrown by anything that is known through sensation, inference or the testimony of a competent witness."[9] I would like to draw attention to two phrases in this simple passage. First, the question arises as to what exactly Diṅnāga intended by specifying that the person advancing an assertion should himself believe the assertion. And, second, the question arises as to what sort of person Diṅnāga had in mind when he spoke of a competent witness (*āpta*). Answers to both of these questions appear in Diṅnāga's own commentary to his work. First, in saying that the person advancing an assertion should himself believe it, Diṅnāga says that he means to specify that the person making the assertion should "accept the assertion independently of any treatise." A later commentator, Prajñākaragupta, quotes Diṅnāga's words and takes them to mean that a person in debate is not to be held accountable for any views propounded by anyone but himself; in other words, a person in debate need not defend a view simply because he belongs to a tradition that propounds that view, but neither can one cite as evidence for the truth of an assertion the fact that others have also believed it. "Hence," concludes Prajñākaragupta, "Diṅnāga states that treatises in and of themselves are of no use."[10] The commentator Jinendrabuddhi[11] also explains Diṅnāga's words along these lines, saying that Diṅnāga mistrusts treatises because their authors often propound doctrines that are themselves in need of proof and they often commit errors in reasoning, and hence nothing stated in a treatise can be accepted as true simply on the grounds that it appears in a treatise. But

in Hattori (1968:94, notes 1.48, 1.49).

9 *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 3.2 reads: "svarūpeṇaiva nirdeśyaḥ svayam iṣṭo'nirākṛtaḥ / pratyakṣārthānumānāptaprasiddhena svadharmiṇi." It is quoted in Dharmakīrti (1953 edition, p. 545 and p. 549).

10 Dharmakīrti (1953 edition, p. 494–95): "kiṁ śāstramātram eva prayojanam uktam ācāryeṇa."

11 Jinendrabuddhi (1957 edition, folio 158a, line 7).

if Diṅnāga intended to rule out an appeal to authority as a legitimate justification for a belief, then we must ask what he meant by speaking of assertions' being overturned by what is known through competent witnesses. After all, the Brahmanical Nyāya authors had claimed that their scriptures were written by competent witnesses, namely, the Vedic Seers (*ṛṣi*). Does Diṅnāga have some sort of seers in mind when he speaks of competent witnesses? The answer to this question becomes clear when we study the example he offers of an assertion that is obviously false because it is overthrown by the testimony of competent witnesses. The assertion is: "The large bright object in the night sky is not the moon."[12] This assertion is false, of course, because we all know that the large bright object in the night sky *is* in fact the moon. But how do we *know* that it is the moon? We can neither experience nor infer the "moonhood" of the bright object in the night sky; rather, its "moonhood" consists solely in the fact that by manmade convention it is proper to apply the word "moon" to the big, round disc that lights up the nocturnal sky. And so if I say, "The large bright object in the night sky is not the moon," I am not really making an assertion at all; rather, I am simply misusing words established by human convention. But how do we know this manmade convention? We learn it, says Diṅnāga, from those who know the language. And so it turns out that these "competent witnesses" to whom Diṅnāga refers are simply the linguistic community at large from whom we learn the proper usage of words, phrases and constructions.

A third passage in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* that reveals Diṅnāga's attitudes towards scripture in general is to be found in the fifth chapter of that work.[13] The issue here is Diṅnāga's contention that appealing to scripture in order to justify a belief is legitimate only if one has first established the general rule that every statement in that body of scripture is known to be true. In this case, the appeal to scripture is really a form of inference in which the minor premise, "Statement A is in scripture B," combined with the major premise, "Every statement in scripture B is known to be true," yields the conclusion, "Statement A is known to be true." Proving that every statement in a given body of scriptures is known to be true may, of course, turn out to be more difficult than showing that a single statement is true by some other means. But Diṅnāga does not rule out the possibility that some such body of scriptures

[12] The actual proposition reads "acandraḥ śaśī." Literally: the rabbit-possessor is non-moon. Here the term *śaśin* is a definite description, referring to the fact that the dark patches on the full moon have the shape of a rabbit. In my discussion I have substituted a different definite description of the moon, one that is more readily understandable to modern non-Indians and serves the same philosophical purpose. The passage in question occurs in Diṅnāga (1975b edition), folio 125a, line 5. Discussions appear in Jinendrabuddhi (1957 edition, folio 163a) and in Śāntarakṣita (1968 edition, p. 503).

[13] Diṅnāga (1982 edition, p. 147).

may exist, every statement of which can be known to be true. How might one go about justifying the belief that a given body of scriptures contains only statements that are known to be true? This belief, says Diṅnāga, is reasonably certain in case one investigates the body of scriptures in question and fails to find statements that are not known to be true. The procedure is exactly parallel to the one we use in determining that all men are mortal. If we examine a large number of men and fail to find a single immortal among them, then we can be relatively certain that every man—including, of course, men not among the sample that we observed directly—is mortal.

So much, then, for the general test that any body of scriptures must pass in order to be considered reliable. The next question is whether Diṅnāga believes that any collection of scriptures manages to pass that test. As interesting as this question may be, we get no unambiguous answer to it in what Diṅnāga himself writes. He does suggest that the Vedas fail to pass the test, for they contain statements that cannot be either verified or falsified and therefore cannot be known to be true.[14] But what of the Buddhist sūtras? They too must surely be admitted to contain statements that cannot be either verified or falsified, for the Buddhist scriptures deal with many of the very same topics as the Brahmanical scriptures, e.g., karma, rebirth, transcendental realms and the like. Nowhere to my knowledge does Diṅnāga claim that these Buddhist *āgamas* pass the test of containing only statements that are known to be true. He does, however, make a claim for the Buddha that is very similar to Gotama's claim for the Vedic seers. The Buddha, he says, knew what was beneficial for man, and in his compassion for others he explained to them what they would not otherwise know about securing their own wellbeing. These qualities serve to make the Buddha a trustworthy expert whose words are safe to heed. Judging from the opening paragraph in Diṅnāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*,[15] it appears to be his view that the Buddha is not simply one among many trustworthy teachers. What distinguishes the Buddha from other religious teachers and disciples, says Diṅnāga, is not the Buddha's correct insight, for many non-Buddhists attain that. Nor is it the Buddha's good intentions, for again he has no monopoly on the wish to serve others. Rather, what distinguishes the Buddha in Diṅnāga's eyes is the unique combination of complete wisdom and altruism that make him alone a genuine source of knowledge and a savior of men. The obviously devotional tone of the opening passage of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* seems to be at odds with Diṅnāga's mistrust of teachers in general, which he makes so clear throughout the remainder of that same work. This tension between Diṅnāga's devotion

14 *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* at 3.5. See Diṅnāga (1957b edition, folio 111a).
15 See Hattori (1968:23).

to the Buddha as a purveyor of truth and his skepticism towards scriptures and the traditional interpretation of scripture is, so far as I am aware, never explicitly resolved in Diṅnāga's writings. I think it possible, however, that his solution might be similar to Vasubandhu's, which it will be remembered consisted in saying that the Buddha was a perfect source of truth of which we now have only an imperfect understanding. In this view the Buddha is fully worthy of worship as an embodiment of the aspirations of every seeker of wisdom, but the Buddha's words as they have come down to us in scripture can be accepted only insofar as they are supported by our own experiences and by sound reasoning.

Although Diṅnāga's exact stance on the authority of scripture is difficult to ascertain precisely and is a matter on which we can now do little more than offer conjectures, it is less difficult to ascertain the attitudes towards scriptures held by Diṅnāga's seventh-century interpreter, Dharmakīrti. It is also relatively easy to assess the importance that Dharmakīrti places on the Buddha in his overall philosophical system. For, in contrast to the fact that Diṅnāga wrote one single benedictory stanza proclaiming the authority of the Buddha, Dharmakīrti devoted two hundred eighty-seven stanzas to this topic, dedicating just under twenty percent of the bulk of his *Pramāṇavārttika* to defending his view that the Buddha is unique among teachers as a source of knowledge.[16] Dharmakīrti's arguments are invariably complex, and his presentation tends not to be very systematic, and so I must say at the outset that there is always a risk in trying to summarize his views of oversimplifying his lines of approach by overlooking important subtleties. With that disclaimer, I shall attempt to recapitulate Dharmakīrti's central position on the authority of Buddhist scriptures. First of all it should be pointed out that Dharmakīrti agrees in principle with philosophers before him who say that we resort to scriptures for guidance when the topic about which we want to know is beyond the range of empirical investigation and beyond the range of empirically grounded inference. In his *Nyāyabindu* (1955 edition, p. 226), for example, he says: "An argument that is grounded in scripture is employed owing to the fact that its subject matter is some unobservable thing."[17] Unfortunately, however, different scriptural traditions give conflicting information about the nature of ultrasensible realities, and this makes it possible for two people, each following a different set of scriptures, to put forward incompatible positions, each of which is warranted by his own scriptures. Obviously, says Dharmakīrti (1955, p. 227), this can occur only "because the founders of systems of thought erroneously attribute to objects properties that they do not in fact have." It is interesting to note here that Dharmakīrti's

16 See Nagatomi (1959).

17 The Sanskrit reads: "tasmād avastudarśanabalapravṛttam āgamāśrayam anumānam."

commentators disagreed among themselves on how to interpret this remark. Vinītadeva[18] (eighth century), for example, argues that *all* founders of systems of thought in which ultrasensible matters are discussed are subject to error; so according to Vinītadeva it was Dharmakīrti's intention to say that even the authors of Buddhist scriptures can go astray when they wax transcendental. Durveka Miśra[19] (eleventh century), on the other hand, argues that what Dharmakīrti intended to say was that only the founders of non-Buddhist systems of thought are subject to error, because only they are known to have made false statements in matters that can be checked against empirical evidence; if the non-Buddhists are wrong in empirical matters, then they are likely to be wrong in transempirical matters too, and conversely since the Buddha's statements are correct on all empirical matters, we can trust him even in those areas in which we cannot verify his statements by some independent means.

Which of these conflicting accounts of Dharmakīrti's intentions is more accurate? To get some insight into this we must examine several discussions in his *Pramāṇavārttika*. In the first chapter of that work[20] he begins with the observation that any body of scriptures is just a collection of statements. Therefore, in determining what if anything scriptures make known, we must first examine what it is that statements in general make known. Statements, says Dharmakīrti, give rise to certainty of only one thing, namely, what the speaker of those statements wanted his audience to believe. Given, however, that people are often mistaken in the information that they pass on to others, and given that people often deliberately deceive their listeners by transmitting false or only partially true information, it is impossible to determine from a statement alone whether its speaker both knew and intended to tell the truth. Therefore, it is by no means self-evident that a body of scriptures contains only truthful statements; for the authors of scriptures may have been mistaken or deceitful. Therefore, our knowledge of the truth of scripture must be derived from some other knowledge. Dharmakīrti offers two criteria by which we can judge the merits of a belief expressed in a statement. The first is the general criterion that he proposes for any belief whether derived from hearsay or from some other source of belief,

[18] Dharmakīrti (1971 edition, p. 63). Under "śāstrakārāṇām artheṣu bhrāntyā svabhāvaviparītopasaṁhārasambhavād," Vinītadeva says: "sarvaiś ca śāstrakārais taddarśanānutpannā api kecana arthāḥ svabhāvaviparyayeṇa abhihitā bhavanti."

[19] Dharmakīrti (1955 edition, p. 227): "śāstrakāra iti tīrthikaśāstrapraṇetāra iti draṣṭavyam, tadvacanasyaiva pramāṇabādhitatvena teṣām eva viparyastatvāt."

[20] I follow the order of chapters as presented in Dharmakīrti (1968): (1) *Pramāṇasiddhi*, (2) *Pratyakṣa*, (3) *Svārthānumāna*, and (4) *Parārthānumāna*. For discussions of the problem of the order of the chapters in *Pramāṇavārttika*, see Stcherbatsky (1932:38) or van der Kuijp (1979:12).

namely, that action in conformity with the belief must yield predicted results. All action is preceded by a wish for specified results, and all action is directed by a set of beliefs. If an action has results other than those desired in initiating the action, then some of the beliefs directing the action were false. Any belief that is not proven false by this pragmatic test may tentatively be considered true. Now this criterion works well enough for beliefs that govern actions having immediate consequences. But scriptures tend to advise courses of action the consequences of which are not to be reaped until far in the future, often beyond the end of the present life. By the time we are in a position to know whether following a particular set of scriptures leads to the promised rewards, or whether it leads instead to several inconvenient eons in hell or to an eternity of mindlessness, it will be too late. All we can know from where we sit now is that the scriptures followed by one sect conflict with the scriptures followed by another sect, and hence it cannot be that both bodies of scripture are reliable. But how can we decide which to accept and which to reject? In answering this question, Dharmakīrti gives us a second criterion of credibility and in giving it he employs exactly the line of reasoning used by many of the Brahmanical thinkers to justify their scriptures. A body of scriptures, says Dharmakīrti, is only as trustworthy as the person who first speaks them. Buddhist scriptures are credible only if the Buddha himself was credible. And the Buddha was credible only if he was himself in full possession of the truth and was furthermore immune from all temptation to deceive anyone. So clearly the two principal questions that Dharmakīrti must address are: (1) how do we know that the Buddha was in possession of the truth, and (2) how do we know that the Buddha did not lie to us? In dealing with the first of these questions, Dharmakīrti falls into the familiar trap of circularity. We can be certain that the Buddha was in full possession of the truth, says Dharmakīrti, because it was the Buddha who taught us the four noble truths and the eightfold path to salvation. In other words, we know that the Buddha is trustworthy because it was he who taught us all the things that we Buddhists believe. The vicious circularity of Dharmakīrti's argument is disguised somewhat by the fact that it takes him some two hundred couplets to make the circle, but it is undeniable that he does eventually end up in a logical loop on this first question. But what about the second of the above questions, which has to do with the Buddha's personal integrity? Dharmakīrti touches upon this question in an interesting imaginary dialogue with an antireligious Cārvāka philosopher.[21] The Cārvāka is portrayed as presenting the following argument: No one speaks unless he has a desire to speak. Whoever desires to speak has a

[21] This discussion occurs in the third chapter of *Pramāṇavārttika* in Dharmakīrti's autocommentary. See Dharmakīrti (1960 edition, p. 9).

desire. But the Buddhists claim that desire is a fault that arises only in one who is irrational, and that whoever is irrational is not trustworthy. Therefore, the Buddhists must admit that no one who speaks is trustworthy. But the Buddha spoke. Therefore his followers must admit that the Buddha was irrational and untrustworthy. Dharmakīrti answers this argument by denying that the Buddhists claim that *all* desire is irrational. The desire to help others, for example, is not considered by Buddhists to be an irrational desire. Given that one's motivation in speaking may be a desire to help others, the fact of speaking does not in itself prove that the speaker is untrustworthy. Nor is it possible to determine from the specific contents of any utterance whether the speaker of the utterance was sincere in speaking it. In short, there is no way that we can judge a man's integrity simply on the basis of what he says, for a scoundrel and a saint may utter exactly the same sentences. Therefore, the judgment of the Buddha's integrity must be founded upon evidence independent of what his doctrines were. Dharmakīrti does attempt to establish the Buddha's integrity,[22] resting his case upon the contention that the Buddha was altruistic. We know that the Buddha was altruistic, says Dharmakirti, because we know that he practiced altruistic exercises and meditations that form the backbone of Buddhist religious practice through countless rebirths. These practices cannot fail, because of the inevitability of the fruition of karma. But establishing this claim leads Dharmakīrti in turn to having to provide arguments in defence of rebirth and the theory of karma. Obviously the full complexity of Dharmakīrti's argument is beyond the scope of the present discussion, but I do hope to have given enough of an outline to show how he proceeds. There are two observations that I wish to make about this procedure. First, as I have already said, it is logically circular, for Dharmakīrti begins by trying to show that Buddhist doctrine is justifiable because it was taught by a trustworthy authority. But in showing that the Buddha was trustworthy, Dharmakīrti ends up appealing to information about the Buddha's career through several rebirths. But the only source of information for the Buddha's career is the very body of scriptures the authority of which Dharmakīrti is trying to defend. The second observation that I wish to make about Dharmakīrti's procedure is that in what is ostensibly a work on the principles of logic and epistemology, Dharmakīrti ends up offering an elaborately argued apology of the central core of Buddhist doctrine, namely, that set of doctrines accepted by nearly all schools of Buddhism and proclaimed in virtually all Buddhist *āgamas*, whether Śravakayāna, Bodhisattvayāna or Tantrayāna in orientation. It was this apologetic quality of Dharmakīrti's work, along with his attempts to justify the teachings of Buddhist scripture without explicitly

[22] Dharmakīrti (1968 edition, pp. 20ff.).

citing scripture as his authority, that provided the model for many of the subsequent generations of Buddhist intellectuals.

The post-Dharmakīrtian tendency to deal with questions of logic and epistemology merely as components within a much larger systematic apology of Buddhist dogma is best exemplified by the *Tattvasaṅgraha* of Śāntarakṣita with its commentary by his disciple Kamalaśīla. This work comprises twenty-six chapters, of which seven (sixteen through nineteen and twenty-four through twenty-six) deal with issues closely related to logic and epistemology; the remaining nineteen argue such medieval Buddhist dogmas as the beginninglessness of the universe, the nonexistence of God, the nonexistence of the individual self or soul, the doctrines of the destruction and recreation of the entire universe in each moment and the nonexistence of any enduring entities or essences, and the ultimate unreality of such metaphysical categories as substance, attribute, motion and universals.

In the final chapter of the *Tattvasaṅgraha*, Śāntarakṣita's central thesis is that the authority of Buddhist scriptures derives from the omniscience of the Buddha. But it is also argued that we are in a position to know of the Buddha's omniscience only because we can prove by some means other than scripture that all his teachings are true. It must be understood that this claim of omniscience is not like the claim by later Hindus such as Jayanta for the unlimited omniscience of God, creator of man and author of the Vedas by which man achieves salvation; that is, the Buddhists do not argue that the Buddha knew every hair on the head of every creature of the past, present and future. Rather, they argued that the Buddha was omniscient with respect to all matters relevant to the nature of salvation and the means of attaining it. As Śāntarakṣita says: "Trying to establish that anyone has knowledge of a multitude of individuals and all their particular features is as pointless as an enquiry into the teeth of a crow. But . . . by establishing that one's own teacher knows only what is proper and improper, one establishes that the scriptures written by that teacher should be believed."[23] Śāntarakṣita is well aware of the difficulties of defending the claim that the Buddha is omniscient even in this limited sense, and he was also quite aware of the fact that everyone who is attached to the dogmas of his own religion can claim that the founder of that religion was omniscient. Thus the Hindus, the Jains, and the Buddhists all claim that their scriptures had omniscient authors; the problem that faces any objective thinker is how to decide, when the putatively omniscient disagree, whom to believe. Is the Buddhist not simply being dogmatic when he claims omniscience for the Buddha but denies the omniscience of God or the Vedic seers or the Jina?

23 Śāntarakṣita (1968 edition, p. 992, verses 3137 and 3139: samastāvayavavyaktivistarajñānasādhanam / kākadantaparīkṣāvat kriyamāṇam anarthakam // svadharmādharmamātrajñasādhanapratiṣedhayoḥ / tatpraṇītāgamagrāhyaheyatve hi prasiddhyataḥ //

Śāntarakṣita: "When most of the omniscient teachers give conflicting information and the warrant for asserting omniscience is the same in every case, why on earth should just one of them be singled out for respect? What evidence is there that the Buddha is omniscient but Kapila is not? Both are supposedly omniscient. So why do they disagree?"[24] Śāntarakṣita's approach to solving the problems that he anticipates is perhaps best captured in this famous passage:

> Those great teachers who are wholly convinced of the obvious rationality of their own teachings and of their own ability to explain them lose all fear. And they dare give voice to the lion's roar that silences bad philosophy, which is akin to the craziness of rutting elephants. They dare to say: "Clever people, O monks, should accept what I say after putting it to the test, just as they accept gold after testing it by melting it, scratching it and scraping it on a whetstone. They should not believe what I say out of deference to me."[25]

Kamalaśīla quotes this passage in his *Nyāyabindupūrvapakṣasaṅkṣipti* and adds the following comments of his own:

> There are three types of object: (1) that which can be experienced directly, (2) that which is presently beyond the range of the senses, and (3) that which is ultrasensible in principle. Among those types of objects, whatever the Buddha discusses that can be experienced directly should be tested by direct experience, as gold is tested by melting. Whatever the Buddha discusses that is presently beyond the range of the senses should be tested by inference, as gold is tested by scraping on a whetstone. Whatever the Buddha discusses that is ultrasensible should be tested for its internal consistency. For the trustworthy experts established the scriptures, which are free from such contaminations [as logical inconsistencies], as credible sources of knowledge, despite the fact that scriptures deal with ultrasensible things.[26]

[24] Śāntarakṣita (1968 edition, p. 995, verses 3147–48): sarvajñeṣu ca bhūyassu viruddhārthopadeśiṣu / tulyahetuṣu sarveṣu ko nāmaiko'vadhāryatām // sugato yadi sarvajñaḥ kapilo neti kā pramā / athobhāv api sarvajñau matabhedas tayoḥ katham //

[25] Śāntarakṣita (1968 edition, pp. 1114–15, vv. 3585–87: yaiḥ punaḥ svoktiṣu spaṣṭam yuktārthatvaṁ viniścitam / tatpratyāyanasāmarthyam āmanaś ca mahātmabhiḥ // kutīrthyamattamātaṅgamadaglānividhāyinam / evam asyākhilatrāsāḥ smṁhanādaṁ nadanti te // tāpāc chedāc ca nikaṣāt suvarṇam iva paṇḍitaiḥ / parīkṣya bhikṣavo grāhyam madvaco na tu gauravāt //

[26] Kamalaśīla (1957 edition, folio 114b, line 4). This passage is translated by Stcherbatsky (1932:77). I find little justification for his translation of the final sentence of the passage, but must admit that my own translation is not entirely satisfactory either. The text reads: "de ltar yongs su dag pa'i lung la ni yul lkog tu gyur kyang, rtog pa dang ldan pa tshad ma yin par yid ches pa rnams 'jug pa'i phyir ro." Stcherbatsky translates: "Thus even in those cases when we have a perfectly reliable sacred (Buddhist) text dealing with a transcendental subject of discourse, we will proceed (not by believing the text), but by believing (in reason as the only) source of theoretical knowledge." His translation violates the

It is clearly Śāntarakṣita's intention to show the Buddha's sincerity by indicating that he invited others to examine his teachings closely for possible errors. From this we are to feel assured that the Buddha was not trying to deceive his followers. But sincerity alone is no guarantee of truth. The truth of the Buddha's teachings must be established one doctrine at a time, and each doctrine must stand up under empirical and rational investigations, and furthermore there must be a logical coherence in the system of doctrines as a whole. And it was for this reason, claims Śāntarakṣita, that he set out in his *Tattvasaṅgraha* to establish the body of Buddhist dogma one doctrine at a time. Having done this to his own satisfaction, he could then proclaim:

> This is a statement for which there is good evidence, namely, that the omniscient lord who has acquired unique talents that distinguish him from the rest of mankind is none other than him whose faultless teaching, in which selflessness is the constantly repeated thesis, is established throughout the present work and is not overturned by any means of knowledge. That being the case, it turns out to be plausible that someone is omniscient, from which it follows that *human* teachings can result in an understanding of truth.[27]

To return now to the question with which I began—were the early Buddhist epistemologists champions of reason or champions of dogma—I have found, not surprisingly, that there is no simple answer. There is no escaping the need to examine each individual Buddhist philosopher on his own and to resist the convenience of characterizing the movement as a whole as an attempt to devise a nonsectarian science or as an attempt to replace an outmoded form of sectarian apologetics with a newer and more powerful form. To summarize the stances taken by the Buddhists that I have examined in this paper, we saw that Vasubandhu was concerned almost exclusively with apologetics and discussed epistemology only as an adjunct to his overall program of indoctrination. Diṅnāga dealt almost exclusively with questions of epistemology and showed little explicit concern with Buddhist doctrines. For him epistemology did approach a nonsectarian discipline like grammar or medicine. In fact he may have been a little too nonsectarian for the tastes of those Buddhists who picked up his work and expanded on it. For in Dharmakīrti we find a heavy intrusion of Buddhist doctrine in an ostensibly epistemological framework. It is largely for this reason, I suggest, that Dharmakīrti's

grammar of the Tibetan and inserts words with no apparent justification; his rendering of the passage in question into Sanskrit is no more reliable than his English rendering.

[27] Śāntarakṣita (1968 edition, pp. 1129–30, vv. 3640 and 3643–34): svabhyastadharmanairātmyā yasyeyaṃ deśanā'malā / sādhitā sarvaśāstreṇa sarvamānair abādhitā // labdhāsādhāraṇopāyo'śeṣapuṁsāṁ vilakṣaṇah / sa ekaḥ sarvavin nātha ity etat sapramāṇakam // itthaṁ yadā ca sarvajñaḥ kaścid evopapadyate / dharmādyadhigame hetuḥ pauruṣeyaṁ tadā vacaḥ //

works were regarded by the later Buddhist tradition as more advanced and more complete than Diṅnāga's; Dharmakīrti's works more explicitly advanced the spread of the dharma than did the works of his predecessor. And in Śāntarakṣita we seem to have come full circle to a situation in which the overriding concern is with doctrine—specifically, the Buddhist doctrine that everything necessary for salvation is within the reach of human beings without a need for divine help or divinely inspired knowledge—rather than with a genuinely disinterested philosophical investigation into the limits of knowledge. And so those Tibetans and modern scholars who saw epistemology as a strictly secular science are at least partially correct, in that what they say is true for the most part of Diṅnāga. But those who saw epistemology as a fundamental part of the overall religious program are also correct, in that what they say is true for much of Dharmakīrti and nearly all of Śāntarakṣita.

It should not be imagined that what I have investigated here gives a complete picture of the course of Buddhist epistemology. Alongside the apologetic works we do find evidence of a gradual development of logical theory that is relatively secular in spirit, relatively free of any sectarian commitment. One observes that refinements in that theory were achieved by the interplay of Buddhist, Jaina, and Brahmanical thinkers. It is not entirely unusual to find Jaina authors commenting on works by Buddhist authors and vice versa. One also finds evidence that, occasionally at least, sectarian rivalries could be overlooked in favor of academic excellence; Durveka Miśra, for example, who was among the most esteemed professors of logic at the great Buddhist university at Vikramaśīla, was a Brahman who never converted to Buddhism and yet taught a generation of prominent Buddhist logicians and wrote instructive commentaries on some of Dharmakīrti's key works on logical theory. But while the development of a purely theoretical and nonsectarian discipline of logic was not entirely neglected, it was clearly overshadowed by the mass of literature produced by post-Dharmakīrtian Buddhist intellectuals in their efforts to provide a principled defense of key Buddhist dogmas, such as the reliability and worshipability of the Buddha, the falsity of Brahmanical scripture, the nonexistence of a soul, the impermanence of all things, the nonexistence of God and so forth. In classical India there was no dearth of very fine philosophical thinking conducted in strict accordance with the canons of impartial investigation, but, as in most places in most ages of history, the quiet voice of reason sometimes had a difficult time being heard above the general background noise of doctrinal enthusiasm.

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REBIRTH

I

Traditional Western conceptions of immortality characteristically presume that we come into existence at a particular time (birth or conception), live out our earthly span and then die. According to some, our death may then be followed by a deathless *post-mortem* existence. In other words, it is assumed that (i) we are born only once and die only once; and (ii) that – at least on some accounts – we are future-sempiternal creatures. The Western secular tradition affirms at least (i); the Western religious tradition – Christianity, Judaism, Islam – generally affirms both (i) and (ii). The Indian tradition, however, typically denies both (i) and (ii). That is, it maintains both that we all have pre-existed beginninglessly, and that we have lived many times before and must live many times again in this world. The Indian picture, then, is that we have died and been reborn innumerable times previous to this life and (failing our undertaking some spiritual discipline) we will be reborn many times in the future. This is sometimes called the Indian belief in reincarnation. The difficulty with this usage is that the term 'reincarnation' suggests a belief in an immortal soul that transmigrates or reincarnates. However Buddhism, while affirming rebirth, specifically denies the existence of an eternal soul. Thus the term 'rebirth' is preferable for referring to the generally espoused Indian doctrine.

The fact that the doctrine of rebirth is fundamental to Indian religious thought (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism) is of course widely known in the West.[1] However, it is symptomatic of the ethnocentrism of contemporary analytic philosophy of religion that the vast majority of philosophers in this tradition continue to ignore Indian religious concepts and prefer to concentrate almost exclusively on Judaeo-Christian religious notions.[2] A typical example of this parochial trend is provided by Peter

[1] An excellent locus for material on Indian views is Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed., *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). The idea of rebirth is, of course, by no means confined to India: compare the selections in Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston, eds., *Reincarnation in World Thought* (New York: Julian Press, 1967). For a recent attempt to rehabilitate reincarnation within Christianity see Geddes MacGregor, *Reincarnation as a Christian Hope* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

[2] A notable exception is to be found in the recent writings of John Hick: see especially his *Death and Eternal Life* (London: Collins, 1975), chs. 16–19; *Philosophy of Religion* 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983), ch. 10.

Geach who prefaces what is, in certain respects, a quite interesting essay on reincarnation with the following demurral:

> ... I shall not try to discuss any Hindu or Buddhist views. This may strike some people as frivolous, in the way that it would be frivolous for somebody writing philosophical theology to discuss the writings of Judge Rutherford rather than of Thomas Aquinas. No doubt Hindu and Buddhist writings about reincarnation are of more inherent interest than *The Search for Bridey Murphy*; but I am wholly incompetent to discuss them; and even if I were myself able to talk about *atman* or *karma*, these are not notions which many of my readers could readily deploy.[1]

The argument is instructive: Geach himself is innocent of Indian views of rebirth; so too are most of his readers; therefore it is better for everyone to remain in this blessed state of innocence. Of course, an unkind critic might suggest that this cognitive innocence is just plain ignorance. Couple this suggestion with the common Indian belief that it is ignorance (*avidyā*) which is the cause of bondage to suffering and we have the beginnings of a case for treating Indian views about rebirth less cavalierly. Anyway, in this paper I propose to take the Indian doctrine of rebirth to be a serious metaphysical hypothesis and to consider critically the question of the philosophical credibility of such a doctrine.

II

Briefly there are two sorts of arguments that can be offered for the rebirth theory: viz. philosophical arguments and empirical arguments. The first category includes metaphysical, ethical and theological arguments for the thesis; the second category presents the thesis as an explanatory hypothesis that satisfactorily accounts for various empirical phenomena. In practice the two types of argument can be rather difficult to separate. However, it is clear that for the thesis to serve as an adequate explanatory hypothesis it must at least be metaphysically coherent. Hence it is appropriate to begin by considering some metaphysical arguments for the truth of the rebirth thesis.

As I have already indicated, the Indian doctrine of rebirth includes both a belief in post-existence (I will be born again after my death) and a belief in pre-existence (my present life was preceded by a previous existence and so on). These two beliefs are in fact logically distinct. Nevertheless, they are mutually supportive. Hence if I pre-existed in a previous life, then I have survived death once and it is not unreasonable to suppose I might survive death again. Similarly, if I am presently post-existing relative to a previous life, then my previous life might also have involved post-existence relative to a yet earlier life – and so on. Finally, if I will post-exist in a succeeding life, then it is not unreasonable to suppose that I will die in that life and be reborn again. Thus pre-existence and post-existence together make probable

[1] Peter Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 2.

(but do not entail) the Indian doctrine of a beginningless plurality of lives. Moreover, any metaphysical evidence for the truth of post-existence would seem also to favour the truth of pre-existence, and vice versa.[1] (Once again, however, it must be admitted that there seems no straightforward entailment relation involved here.)

In any case, the doctrine of pre-existence is certainly part of the Indian view of rebirth and so it is important to examine arguments for the truth of the doctrine. Now most Indian philosophers have believed (as most Indians still do) that we all have pre-existed beginninglessly. Indeed, since only the defunct Cārvāka school maintained otherwise, classical Indian philosophy displays a relative paucity of arguments for this thesis when compared with the extensive body of discussion it offers about the nature of what it is that has pre-existed.[2] Thus there are some empirical arguments adduced, like the Naiyāyika appeal to the inborn inclination of infants to suckle and their fears and joys.[3] These, however, may be uncompelling in the light of modern biological theory. There are also certain theological arguments related to the efficacy of the thesis in explaining away the problem of evil.[4] But these require for their plausibility prior commitment to a theistic point of view. More interesting philosophically are certain metaphysical arguments that purport to establish the pre-existence thesis. I want to examine critically two such attempts: one by the eighth century Indian Buddhist philosopher Śāntarakṣita and one by an outstanding modern Western interpreter of Indian philosophy, Karl H. Potter.

Śāntarakṣita's argument (glossed by his pupil Kamalaśīla) appears in his remarkable polemical compendium, the *Tattvasaṅgraha* (*ślokas* 1857–1964).[5] The chapter in question is devoted to a refutation of the views of the materialist Lokāyatas. It is important to understand, however, that this argument for pre-existence is not an argument for the pre-existence of a soul, i.e. an enduring substantial entity underlying change. Indeed, as a Buddhist Śāntarakṣita is committed to the denial of any such entity. Rather he assumes a particular Buddhist account of a person as a series of causally efficient point-instants. According to some Buddhist philosophers this person-series includes both mental and physical events or states. Hence for them a person

[1] Similar conclusions are urged in J. M. E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), ch. 4; *The Nature of Existence*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), ch. 63. However, much of McTaggart's argumentation concerning pre-existence and post-existence is inextricably connected with the special peculiarities of his own metaphysical system.

[2] For a review of some of these arguments see Ninian Smart, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), ch. 12.

[3] *Nyāyasūtra* III. 1. 18, 21. There is a brief discussion of these arguments in Karl H. Potter, ed., *Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika up to Gaṅgeśa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 35–7.

[4] On these sorts of arguments see Arthur L. Herman, *The Problem of Evil and Indian Thought* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), part III.

[5] See *The Tattvasaṅgraha of Śāntarakṣita with the Commentary of Kamalaśīla*, vol. 2, trans. Ganganatha Jha (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1939), pp. 887–935. This seems to be the unspecified source for the 'Buddhist Idealist' argument cited in Smart, pp. 160–1.

is a two-strand causal series comprising both a chain of physical events and a chain of mental events. The two chains are related co-ordinately (*sādṛśya*) but not causally: a view similar to the theory of psycho-physical parallelism in Western philosophy.[1] However, Śāntarakṣita seems to favour an idealist account at various points, in which case the person is presumably to be identified with the chain of mental events. Either way, the argument is an argument for the pre-existence of the consciousness series.

The argument rests upon two principles. The first is the principle of universal causation, i.e. that every event has a cause. The second is a principle to the effect that not every mental event is totally caused by physical events. Or more exactly, that there are some mental events which have no physical events in their casual ancestry (allowing here for the possibility of indirect causation). Call this the 'mental cause principle'. (Note that this formulation of the mental cause principle is compatible with either a realist or an idealist ontology.) These two principles can then be used to generate the following argument. For consider the first member of the chain of cognitions. Or more precisely, consider the first mental state in the life of an individual that is not totally caused by physical states. It must have as at least its part-cause a mental state occurring before the birth (or conception) of the individual. Thus pre-existence is established. Moreover, since this argument can be repeated for any previous life, the beginninglessness of the causal series of cognitions is established. Finally, since there is a previous birth, it is also reasonable to assume a future birth. After all, the cognition at the moment of death in this life is presumably causally efficacious in precisely the same way that the last cognition of the previous life was.

There are various ways to try to block the regress this argument trades upon. One is to invoke the hypothesis of the existence of God. That is, we might argue that the first non-physically caused mental state in the life of an individual was caused by a divine mental state. The individual is not, then, beginningless. Moreover, the existence of the consciousness series is thus dependent upon God's existence, i.e. He is the creator. However, the regress will apply in the case of God, for the chain of divine mental states is indeed beginningless (God is eternal).

As a Buddhist Śāntarakṣita is unwilling to admit the theistic hypothesis and elsewhere in his work he argues independently against the existence of God. However, even if the theistic hypothesis can be ruled out on other grounds, there remains another possibility. The theistic hypothesis presupposes the truth of a more general principle, viz. that the first non-physically caused mental state in the life of an individual could have been caused by a mental state of some other individual. But if we admit this principle, then

[1] This sort of view can be found in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*: compare Karl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 130–7; Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word 'Dharma'* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923).

we do not need to insist that it is God's mental states which cause the initial mental states of other individuals. Rather, any individual's mental states could cause another's initial mental state. Thus what the regress will now show is the beginninglessness of causally efficient mental states, not the beginninglessness of any particular chain of such states. That is, the existence of conscious beings (conceived of here as causal series) could well be beginningless without this necessitating that any particular conscious being is beginningless. To block this possibility Śāntarakṣita would have to deny the general principle that a person's initial mental state could be directly caused by the mental state of another. Now there seems no *logical* difficulty with such a possibility: telepathy is presumably a putative example of such a phenomenon and that seems at least a coherent hypothesis. Hence the principle will have to be rejected on empirical grounds. That is, it will be maintained that while such causal interactions may be logically possible, it is contingently the case that no such interactions take place in our world. The plausibility of this empirical claim will then be as strong as the case against the existence of the relevant parapsychological phenomena. Assuming this to be still an open question, I leave the matter there.

Of course, this does not exhaust the range of escape routes from Śāntarakṣita's regress argument. As I have already indicated, the argument rests upon two principles: the principle of universal causation and the mental-cause principle. Hence the denial of one or both of these principles will disarm the argument. Now some would be willing to deny the first principle and maintain that certain events are uncaused. Data from quantum mechanics is sometimes used to support such a position. However, the correct interpretation of this data is highly controversial philosophically. At the very least, it is unclear that the instance of uncaused subatomic events (if they indeed occur) would in any way undermine the causal principle construed as a thesis about macroscopic events. If we then assume that mental events are macroscopic events, the regress argument is untouched.

Another way of denying the causal principle is to opt for contra-causal libertarianism and maintain that certain events are indeed uncaused; most importantly, free human actions. This move can then block the regress by maintaining that the first non-physically caused mental event in the life of an individual need not be mentally caused. Instead it could be uncaused, as are all free mental acts. Of course, libertarianism has its own problems. First, it owes us an account of how such uncaused events can be *actions* done under an agent's control. Secondly, if free acts are uncaused events then how can such events be rendered explicable without appealing to causal explanations? Now it may be that libertarianism is able to present a consistent story about these matters. However, I shall assume for the moment that the principle of universal causation is better entrenched than the libertarian view of acts that are uncaused events.

One final point about the principle of universal causation. I formulated the principle of universal causation as the principle that every event has a cause. But it might be objected that Śāntarakṣita's regress argument seems rather to require a principle to the effect that every event has a prior cause. And such a principle is surely false, for a cause and its effect might be simultaneous (as a train's motion is simultaneous with the motion of its carriages that it causes). Now it does seem reasonable to concede that sometimes causes and effects can be contemporaneous; but this admission need not touch Śāntarakṣita's argument. For either the first non-physically caused mental event of this life is caused by a prior mental event, or else it is caused by a contemporaneous mental event. On the first option, of course, we have the regress underway. On the second option, however, we are no better off. For what is the cause of the mental event that is the contemporaneous cause of the first non-physically caused mental event of this life? Given that it is not physically caused, then its cause must be either a prior mental event, or else another contemporaneous mental event. In the first case we have the infinite temporal regress underway; in the second case we can ask the same question once again about the cause of that contemporaneous cause. So either we have an infinite temporal regress, or (implausibly) we have an infinity of contemporaneous causes and effects at the beginning of the causal series of each person's mental events.

What about the mental-cause principle then? Materialism, of course, denies this principle; so too does epiphenomenalism. Acceptance of the principle apparently commits us either to idealism or to dualism (i.e. interactionist dualism or parallelism). The standard Indian objection to the strong materialist claim that identifies the mental and the physical is a familiar one, resting upon what Western philosophers sometimes parochially call 'Leibniz's Law'. That is, it is maintained that mental states have properties not shared by physical states and hence cannot be identical with physical states. Unfortunately, the objection is inconclusive since it is usually subjective phenomenal properties that are appealed to and Leibniz's Law is notoriously unreliable in intentional contexts. In any case, the Indian materialists (the Cārvākas or Lokāyatas) generally conceded that consciousness possesses properties which seem peculiar to itself. But these properties, it was asserted, are supervenient upon physical states. Consciousness, then, is an emergent characteristic of the physical states formed by combinations of material elements. Just as, for example, the red colour of *pān* is an emergent property of the ingredients (betel, areca nut, lime), none of which is individually red coloured; so too consciousness is an emergent property of the unconscious material elements.

Putting aside for the moment the opaqueness of the whole notion of emergent properties, Śāntarakṣita has a twofold reply to the Lokāyata view. Firstly, he argues that the materialist claim that the mental is always causally

dependent upon the physical is not conclusively established. This is because we cannot apply the customary method of agreement and difference to support the existence of such a universal causal law. Thus in the case of other people, we never have direct access to their mental states to establish the necessary positive and negative concomitance. In our own case, on the other hand, although we can observe the concomitance of some mental and bodily states, we obviously cannot do this for the *first* mental event of our present life. Hence there is no proof that the two sets of phenomena are causally related in the way the materialist claims. Secondly, it seems that there is in fact evidence to suggest that some mental states are not totally physically caused. In dreams or imaginings, for example, the mind can apparently work independently of external physical stimuli. Perhaps, then, some mental states could even occur independently of *any* physical cause.

Now the whole question of the relation of the mental and the physical is, of course, a deep and tangled one; one I do not intend to pursue any further here. All I want to claim here and now is that if we concede Śāntarakṣita his mental-cause principle (as many philosophers would) and also his principle of universal causation (as again many philosophers would), then his argument is apparently sound – though, as was pointed out, he has to deny direct causal relations between minds. The argument shows, then, at least the possibility of pre-existence (and with it, rebirth). Indeed, depending upon the strength of one's commitments to the premises of the argument, it can surely make the notion of pre-existence (and rebirth) extremely plausible. This, I take it, should be a surprising conclusion to those Western philosophers who might be sympathetic to the principles that generate Śāntarakṣita's argument.

III

Karl Potter's argument is rather different from Śāntarakṣita's.[1] Whereas Śāntarakṣita's is an argument for the pre-existence of the consciousness series, Potter's is an argument for the beginningless pre-existence of the morally responsible agent. It involves no detailed account of the nature of such a beginningless agent and certainly does not involve any overt commitment to dualism or idealism. Nevertheless, there is a certain family resemblance between the two arguments at least insofar as both are infinite regress arguments.

Briefly the argument is as follows. Suppose we analyse 'A has the ability to φ' as roughly something like 'A is in a condition such that, given opportunity, if he tries to φ then he succeeds a certain percentage of the

[1] Karl H. Potter, 'Pre-existence' in P. T. Raju and Alburey Castell, eds., *East–West Studies on the Problem of the Self* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 193–207. This paper was originally presented in 1965 and Potter briefly reiterates the argument in order to build upon it in his 'Freedom and Determinism from an Indian Perspective', *Philosophy East and West*, XVII (1967), 113–24 (especially pp. 114–16). The argument has an ancestral connection with one offered in John Wisdom, *Problems of Mind and Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 123–6.

time'.[1] Now consider a particular case: 'Smith has the ability to raise-his-arm-at-t_2' will thus be analysed as something like 'There is a condition C such that if at t_n Smith is in C and, given opportunity, tries to raise his arm, then he succeeds in raising his arm at t_{n+1} a certain percentage of the time; and Smith is in C at t_1'. But if Smith has the ability to raise his arm at t_2 then it must also be true that he has the ability to try to raise his arm at t_1. However, trying to raise his arm is itself another action and hence Smith's ability to perform this action is open to a parallel analysis to that given to 'Smith has the ability to raise-his-arm-at-t_2'. That is: 'There is a condition C′ such that if at t_{n-1} Smith is in C′ and, given opportunity, tries to try-at-t_n-to-raise-his-arm-at-t_{n+1}, then he succeeds in trying-at-t_n-to-raise-his-arm-at-t_{n+1} a certain percentage of the time; and Smith is in C′ at t_0'.

Obviously we can now generate a regress. Moreover, given that Smith's responsibility for raising his arm requires that he has the ability to raise his arm, then his responsibility for trying to raise his arm requires that he has the ability to try to raise his arm. Thus if the ability to try to φ is a prerequisite for attributing responsibility to someone for φ-ing, the agent must be beginningless. Otherwise there is some action of the agent which he is unable to try to perform and yet his ability to perform it is a necessary condition of his being responsible for his performance of φ. That is, if the agent is not beginningless he cannot be responsible for any of his actions.

Note that the argument is for the thesis that the agent must have the ability to perform an infinite number of actions in order to perform any action at all. But the analysis does not require that an action must be preceded by another action; only that an action must be preceded by the agent's *ability* to perform another action. In other words, the regress involved here is not the regress that the notion of basic actions is supposed to block. What the argument is supposed to show, then, is that an agent can never come into existence, but must have existed beginninglessly. For suppose that there was a first event in an agent's history. In that case that first event is not an action since there is no prior condition the agent was in (as required by the analysis of 'having the ability to act' assumed here). But then neither can any subsequent event be an action of that agent either, for no subsequent event could be preceded by the appropriate conditions. Thus the agent never acts, or has always had the ability to act. If the agent is acting now, he must be beginningless.

Naturally some will be disposed to regard this conclusion as a *reductio* of the presupposed analysis of ability or of the sort of account of responsibility that utilizes it. However, it does seem that a similar argument could be generated from any conditional analysis of ability. That is, any analysis that

[1] Such an analysis is offered in Arnold S. Kaufman, 'Ability', *Journal of Philosophy*, LX (1963), 537–51.

explicates ability in terms of a subjunctive conditional of some form.[1] Of course, the critic might also welcome this more general conclusion, in which case he presumably owes us an alternative and superior account of ability. Be that as it may, there does remain one possible attempt to avoid the conclusion of the regress argument while accepting the general sort of account of ability. The argument, it will be remembered, assumes that having the ability is causally relevant to an agent's performing an action. The regress then generated presupposes that the ability to perform the act involves the existence of a condition of the agent prior to the performance of the act. But this surely need not be the case. For given that the idea is that the appropriate condition is causally relevant, then (as we earlier remarked) a cause need not temporally precede its effect; it might be contemporaneous with its effect. Could, then, an ability to perform an action come into existence contemporaneously with the performance of the action? And would this prevent the regress argument that implies the beginninglessness of the agent?

It seems that there is such an escape route, though how attractive it would be is unclear. Let's suppose there is an event E which is the first event in an agent's history. For that event to be an action performed by the agent there would also have to be another event E′, the agent's ability to try to bring about E. (This will be an event insofar as, on the account of ability assumed here, it involves the occurrence of an appropriate condition of the agent.) And this in turn means that there must be a third event E″ (the agent's ability to try to try to bring about E) – and so on. But now suppose that we allow E, E′, E″, etc., to be all contemporaneous. In this case we can then avoid the temporal regress to the beginninglessness of the agent. However, if we do this then we have to accept that the first action which the agent performed involved the simultaneous occurrence of an infinite number of causally implicated contemporaneous events. (Not all of these events, of course, are other actions.) Hence the regress that implies the beginninglessness of the agent can be evaded in this way, but at a cost. One consequence of this escape route is that the agent's performance of his first action also supposedly involves the simultaneous occurrence of an infinity of other contemporaneous events, all of which are causally implicated in the occurrence of that first action.[2] It is hard to see that this is much more plausible than the beginninglessness of the agent.

Anyway, rather than press the matter any further here let us look instead at exactly what the argument would establish if it were indeed sound. The thesis it purports to establish is the beginninglessness of an agent. By itself,

[1] On such analyses and their difficulties see Lawrence H. Davis, *Theory of Action* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), ch. 3.

[2] A similar difficulty for Chisholm's account of agent causalism is pointed out in Graham Oddie, 'Control' in R. G. Durrant, ed., *Essays in Honour of Gwen Taylor* (Dunedin: Philosophy Department, University of Otago, 1982), pp. 198–9.

however, this thesis entails no detailed theory about the number or nature of such agents. Nevertheless an important point about Indian views of rebirth is brought out by the argument. For (as Potter points out) it is the active factors of personality that all Indian philosophers regard as that which has beginningless existence; i.e. our powers of choice and discrimination, our abilities. Hence I propose a minimal account of the beginningless agent by characterizing an agent as a locus of (basic) actions and abilities.[1] Such a definition seems required both philosophically and exegetically. Philosophically it is necessary to identify the agent with the locus of actions and abilities if we are to avoid the problem of how otherwise to connect an agent and his abilities on the one side with his actions on the other. Between an agent and his basic actions there is no gap to bridge. Exegetically the proposal accords well with the doctrine of karma, a doctrine crucially intertwined with the Indian belief in rebirth. This is the doctrine that our actions have causal consequences which determine our subsequent situations. Thus my present circumstances are the effect of my previous deeds, just as my future circumstances will be determined by my present actions. (The term 'karma' derives from the Sanskrit root *kṛ*, to act.)

Consider in this regard the following passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV. 4. 5):

> According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.
>
> But people say: 'A person is made [not of acts, but] of desires only.' [In reply to this I say:] As is his desire, such is his resolve; as is his resolve, such the action he performs; what action (*karma*) he performs, [into that does he become changed].[2]

The first part of this quotation, of course, is a succinct statement of the doctrine of karma. However, at the same time it is highly suggestive for our purposes in that it apparently identifies the agent with his actions. Then, in reply to an objection, it broadens this account to include the causal components of his actions, i.e. his desires and resolutions (or perhaps 'volitions' since the Sanskrit *kratuḥ* may be translated as 'will' as well as 'resolve'). This surely amounts to much the same as the suggestion that an agent is the locus of basic actions and abilities (insofar as these latter are causal components of his basic actions).

Now it might seem simpler here to drop the use of the term 'locus' and simply identify the agent with the set of his actions, or even just with the set

[1] Cf. the suggestion in Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) that the limits of my self are defined by my repertoire of basic actions. Danto, however, identifies basic actions with physiological processes and hence identifies agents with their bodily processes. The account I am proposing is neutral with regard to the question of whether there are irreducibly mental basic acts.

[2] *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, trans. Robert Ernest Hume, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 140.

of desires that cause the actions.[1] However, there are two objections to such a proposal: one philosophical and one exegetical. The philosophical objection is that it is unclear how we are to individuate agents on such an account. For it seems possible that there could be two exactly similar desire-sets characterizing two distinct agents. And yet on this account such agents would have to be identical. The exegetical objection is that such an account is too nominalistic to be an acceptable exposition of the general Indian view. Desires and actions are apparently properties of an agent, and many Indian philosophers wish to insist upon a distinction between properties and property-possessors.

My use of the term 'locus' was suggested by the Sanskrit philosophical terms *āśraya* and *adhiṣṭhāna*, both of which are often translated as 'locus'. Roughly speaking, in Indian philosophy an *āśraya* or *adhiṣṭhāna* is that which things reside 'in' or 'on' or 'at'. It is not necessarily conceived of as spatio-temporal; (it certainly is not so conceived in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, for example). However, spatio-temporal difference implies difference of loci. The locus of a property or object X is that in which X resides. Thus on realist accounts the relation of a property to its locus is the relation of a universal to the particular it characterizes, or the relation between a property and the substance it is 'in'.

Now in proposing an account of an agent as a locus of basic actions and abilities I have deliberately left open the question of what sort of an account is to be given of the relation between properties and their loci. Hence the minimal definition offered should be unexceptionable to almost all Indian philosophers. Where they differ is in what further account of properties and property-possessors they maintain. Hindu philosophers, for example, tend to favour some sort of realist or conceptualist account which understands the loci to be substances (material or immaterial). On the other hand, nominalist Buddhist philosophers, working with an event ontology, eliminate property-possessors in favour of bundles of properties or property-instances. However, these are further metaphysical questions which need not prevent all of these philosophers agreeing that an agent is a locus of basic actions and abilities.

But even if the exegetical problem is met by my account, what about the individuation problem? There certainly is a philosophical problem here. However, this is not a particular problem for the proposed account of an agent. It is just a special case of a general metaphysical problem about properties and property-possessors. If we understand loci to be substantial property-possessors then we have to be able to individuate substances. But if an agent is a substance, then how do we individuate substances as distinct from the properties they possess? On the other hand, if we reject substances as the Buddhists do, then there are no individuals to be identified as agents

[1] For the suggestion that the self is simply a set of actual or potential desires (needs, wants, and interests) see Herman, pp. 192–5.

but only causally related patterns of events. Agents (like all 'entities') are analysed as processes, patterns of events. But then the problem is how to individuate such processes. Either way, there is no special problem about the individuation of agents. Whatever general metaphysical account is to be given of the relation of a property to its locus will be used to deal with the individuation problem about agents. Similarly, whatever general account is given of identity preservation through change of properties will also be used to deal with the problem of what preserves identity of the agent through time and change (including rebirth). On these general metaphysical questions Indian philosophers (like their Western counterparts) take various positions so that it cannot be said that there is one general Indian account of these matters.

IV

The obvious objection at this point is that even if we can concede the metaphysical coherence of the notion of a beginningless agent conceived of as a locus of basic actions and abilities, yet such a concept of an agent is clearly not identical with the concept of a person. Hence pre-existence and rebirth so conceived do not really involve any sort of personal continuance. And this, of course, is true insofar as it goes. Indeed it is precisely what we would expect, given any knowledge of the Indian context of the doctrine of rebirth. Thus it is part of the Indian view that we can be reborn not just as humans, but as gods, demons, animals and even plants. It is hard to see that any account of *personal* identity could embrace such successive rebirths. Moreover, the Indian religio-philosophical tradition is deeply opposed to a concern with what most Westerners would consider ordinary human personality, regarding such a concern as a source of bondage to suffering. The eschatologies of Indian religions generally present a picture of final release wherein the agent so blessed is a very different sort of being from our ordinary conception of a person. And this in turn is one instance of the radically different conception of the nature and value of the individual person in Indian thought as compared with that familiar to us from, for example, the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

However, these remarks just seem to invite further objections. At least three questions naturally come to mind. Firstly, if there is no sense of strong personal identity across lives, then surely the theory is entirely void of any genuine personal significance? Secondly, if my rebirth is not the same person as me, then why should I concern myself with his fate? Thirdly, if he is not the same person as me, then how can he justly incur the karmic consequences of *my* actions (as the doctrine of karma maintains).[1]

[1] For an interesting discussion of these sorts of objections in relation to Theravāda Buddhism see Peter Forrest, 'Reincarnation Without Survival of Memory or Character', *Philosophy East and West*, XXVIII (1978), 91–7.

The first problem, then, is whether the doctrine of rebirth is essentially vacuous in personal terms, even though it might be a metaphysical possibility. In this connection consider, for instance, the argument from the fact that we do not normally remember our putative previous lives. Now clearly the truth of this claim cannot in itself rule out the possibility of our pre-existence: I do not remember what I ate for lunch three weeks ago, but this does not entail that I did not have lunch then. Rather, the point seems to be that in the absence of memory the past lives would form only a disconnected series with no sense of personal continuity between them. The connections between lives would then be too weak to make the idea of rebirth of any real interest personally. In his *Discourse on Metaphysics* (section 34) Leibniz put the point thus:

> Suppose that some individual could suddenly become King of China on condition, however, of forgetting what he had been, as though being born again, would it not amount to the same practically, or as far as the effects could be perceived, as if the individual were annihilated, and a King of China were the same instant created in his place? The individual would have no reason to desire this.[1]

In reply to this argument we might begin by pointing out that there is at least one sense of memory which is not explicitly excluded in Leibniz's scenario. For example, I remember how to tie shoelaces without remembering when and where I learnt to do this. Thus it is possible that memories as abilities or capacities might link lives in a fashion that is of some personal relevance without there being conscious memories of the experiences of these previous lives. And in fact the doctrine of karma does maintain that certain dispositions of the sort alluded to here carry across lives. The second point that needs to be made is that some people do claim to remember their previous lives. In the Indian tradition such an ability is thought to be typical of saints and *yogins*. (The Buddhist tradition, for instance, very early linked the acquisition of the ability to recall former births with the actual enlightenment experience of Gautama Buddha.)[2] Moreover, claimed memories of former lives are by no means limited to saints. Occasionally even ordinary people maintain that they have memories of at least fragments of previous lives; such memories including subsequently confirmed data which would seem to have not been available to them in any usual way.[3] Although such cases may not be frequent and well documented enough to be conclusive evidence for rebirth, they are nevertheless strongly suggestive of rebirth.

[1] *Leibniz Selections*, Philip P. Wiener ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 340.

[2] See, for instance, *Majjhima Nikāya*, I. 248; *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, II. 213. There are numerous other references in the Pāli Canon to the ability of an adept to recall past lives: see *Digha Nikāya*, I. 81; *Majjhima Nikāya*, I. 482, II. 31, III. 99, etc.

[3] On such cases the careful researches of Professor Ian Stevenson should be consulted: see his *The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations* (Tadworth: M. C. Peto, 1961); *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, 2nd ed. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1974); *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*, vols. I–III (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1975–9).

Furthermore, they serve to undermine the claim that the rebirth doctrine is entirely vacuous in personal terms.

These remarks, however, are inconclusive as they stand. In the first place, while it is surely possible that certain dispositions can carry across lives (our genetic inheritance would instance this); yet this degree of psychological continuity may be felt to be too weak to count as *rebirth*. It seems we require some element of memory for the doctrine to have any real personal significance. Of course, the requirement that we actually remember our previous lives is too strong. To preserve the theory from personal vacuity perhaps all we need is the requirement of latent memories. That is, if memory of any given life may be regained at some later point in the series of lives, then this possibility will provide sufficient continuity to hold the series together and hence guarantee the non-vacuity of the concept.[1]

But this suggestion is likely to be judged unsatisfactory for the following reason. The thesis is that the psychological continuity required to make the notion of rebirth non-vacuous can be explicated in terms of actual or latent memories. There is, however, an obvious and fundamental difference between *really* remembering and *seeming* to remember. I can only have real memories of my previous life if I am the same person as the person whose life I remember. But the account of rebirth under discussion supposedly does not insist that I am in any strong sense the *same person* as the person whose life I remember and whom I claim to be a rebirth of.

To meet this objection we need to prise memories (latent or otherwise) away from actual past experiences of those who remember. This can be done by taking over a suggestion of Derek Parfit's and introducing a new notion of memory which he calls *q-memory*:

> I am *q*-remembering an event if (1) I have a belief about a past experience which seems in itself like a memory belief, (2) someone did have such an experience, and (3) my belief is dependent upon this experience in the same way (whatever that is) in which a memory of an experience is dependent upon it.[2]

Memories, then, are just *q*-memories of one's own experiences. The concept of *q*-memories is the wider concept; the class of memories is a subset of the class of *q*-memories. If we drop the narrower concept of memory in favour of the wider concept of *q*-memory, then we can explicate the memory condition that provides the psychological continuity across the series of lives in terms of latent *q*-memory. The account so modified is not then open to the objection that it requires a stronger sense of personal identity than it is willing to admit.

The view outlined so far, then, does provide for a sense of continuity which would guarantee the non-vacuity of the doctrine of rebirth in personal terms

[1] Cf. C. J. Ducasse, *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life After Death* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1961), p. 225.

[2] Derek Parfit, 'Personal Identity', *Philosophical Review*, 8 (1971), 15.

without insisting upon strict identity across lives. This seems to capture the general Indian view. In the Buddhist tradition, for example, this view is expressed by the claim that the reborn person is 'neither the same nor another' (*na ca so na ca añño*) in relation to the deceased whose karma he inherits. Thus the well known exchange in the *Milanda-pañha* (II, 2, 1):

The king asked: 'When someone is reborn, Venerable Nagasena, is he the same as the one who just died, or is he another?' The Elder replied: 'He is neither the same nor another.'[1]

Insofar, however, as the reborn person is the karmic heir of the deceased, linked to him by both causally induced dispositions and latent *q*-memories, it is appropriate to regard them as the same agent, even if they are not strictly the same person.[2]

V

Two further objections to the theory of rebirth were mentioned earlier. They can be conveniently grouped together in that they both concern the moral dimensions of the theory. The first is expressed in the question: 'If my rebirth is not strictly speaking the same person as myself, then why should I concern myself with his fate?' The answer is that there is a moral obligation towards one's karmic heir. Not only is there a general presumption that we are morally obliged to consider the interests of future generations, but there is a 'self-referentially altruistic' argument for particularly concerning oneself with the fate of one's karmic heir. For it is generally felt that one has a particular obligation to those closest to oneself (relatives, friends, etc.) and on this theory one's karmic heir is the very closest of surviving relations. Moreover, if we assume that people are most easily motivated by egoistic concerns, then the more closely we identify with our karmic heirs, the easier it will be to fulfil our moral responsibilities to them. Hence regarding one's karmic heir as the closest moral equivalent to oneself will make it easier to fulfil one's moral obligations.

The other objection, it will be recalled, was to do with the apparent injustice of someone not identical with me incurring the karmic consequences of *my* actions. Strictly speaking, this is not an objection to the theory of rebirth but to the doctrine of karma. However, since the two doctrines are closely intertwined in the Indian tradition, it is appropriate to say something about this charge. In the first place the objection presupposes the truth of a retributivist account of just punishment. That is, it is assumed that it is only just for me to suffer the karmic consequences of a person's actions if I am

[1] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), pp. 149–150.

[2] Cf. *Mahābhārata*, XII, 218 (220), 35 where there is a criticism (apparently directed at the Buddhist view) of the idea that karma should fall to the lot of other than the doer of the deed. Of course, the Buddhist would concede this but deny that 'same doer or agent' is equivalent to 'same person'. Moreover, he would point out that his Hindu opponents must also admit this non-equivalence. Where they differ is on the question of whether '*a* is the same (agent) as *b*' involves absolute or only relative identity.

that very same person. But on alternative deterrence or reformative theories of punishment it may be justifiable in certain circumstances to punish someone for an action he did not commit. Secondly, if we conceive of the 'law of karma' as involving the claim that 'justice is done', then what we have is an implicit theory of justice according to which one's responsibility for actions does not necessarily involve one's strict identity with the person who performed these actions. That is, '*x* is right to hold *y* responsible' is the primitive relation and '*A* has the karma of having done *b*' entails '*A* is rightly held responsible for having done *b*'.[1] Such a theory may seem more plausible if we recall that it is certainly a psychological fact that people can feel responsible or be held by others to be responsible for deeds not committed by them. Thus the guilt of some whites over their ancestors' treatment of black slaves, or the way in which some blacks hold all whites to be responsible for past mistreatments of blacks. (This example is, of course, only supposed to show that the idea that one person can be responsible for the actions of another person is not so alien a notion as all that. It is not claimed that this proves that such ascriptions are in fact just.)

Finally, it is sometimes objected that the moral intelligibility of the doctrine that my present circumstances are the result of actions in a previous life requires that we remember such lives. Otherwise there can be no sense in which someone can be held responsible for an action of which he knows nothing and which occurred before he was born. Hick suggests that this argument can be met by invoking the possibility of latent memories which at some later time are recovered and hence link together the series of lives and deeds in a morally intelligible way.[2] However, even without appealing to Hick's rejoinder, the objection surely will not do. Suppose that as the result of an accident caused by himself a man both kills a pedestrian and also incurs amnesia so that he can remember neither the accident nor the circumstances leading to it. His responsibility for the accident is certainly not diminished by his present circumstances. Nor need he *remember* his actions to feel responsible; all he needs for that is the *belief* that he was responsible for the accident. Thus neither responsibility nor the feeling of being responsible require memory (latent or actual).

IV

To sum up then. I have argued for the metaphysical coherence of the general Indian account of rebirth. To this end two arguments for pre-existence were

[1] Cf. Forrest, p. 94.

[2] *Death and Eternal Life*, p. 354. However, Hick is much more impressed by the argument that the doctrine of karma cannot satisfactorily explain away the problem of suffering (including the inequality of human birth and circumstances) because it involves an infinite regress of explanations which ultimately leaves the phenomenon unexplained: see *Death and Eternal Life*, pp. 308–9; *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 141–2. This argument seems to me unsatisfactory, based as it is upon a confusion about the nature of explanation and explanatory ultimates. For criticism see my 'Karma and the Problem of Suffering' *Sophia*, xxiv, No. 1 (1985), 4–10.

considered. The first of these was for the pre-existence (and, by analogy, post-existence) of the consciousness series. Given certain qualifications, the argument was found to be sound. The second argument for the pre-existence of the agent was also found to be plausible (given, once again, certain qualifications). However, neither argument establishes the pre-existence or post-existence of *persons* (unless one is unwisely willing simply to identify these with the consciousness series of the first argument). But this is to be expected when we remember the rather different conception of the nature and value of personal existence operating in the Indian context. Nevertheless the notion of the pre-existence and post-existence of the beginningless agent (conceived of as a locus of actions and abilities) was argued to be not only a metaphysically coherent view, but also one which would be non-vacuous in terms of personal significance.

Of course, the Indians consider the doctrine of rebirth to be more than just a metaphysically coherent theory. Typically they regard the existence of the beginningless cycle of birth, death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) to be a disagreeable fact. The eschatological goal of the Indian religio-philosophical tradition is complete freedom (*mokṣa*) from this cycle. In keeping with our general account of the agent as a locus of actions and abilities, complete freedom in this tradition is conceived of as a state of non-action wherein those abilities which individuate the agent are nevertheless retained.[1] The agent in such a state does not necessarily cease to exist, even though such an agent is no longer aware of himself *as* an individual. Once again the basic conception of the nature and value of personal existence presupposed here is very different from the traditional Western view and hence so too is the treatment of the notion of immortality. Of course, there still remains the philosophical matter of the nature and value of this Indian goal of complete freedom. But that is another question.[2]

[1] Cf. Potter, 'Pre-existence', p. 205.

[2] Elsewhere, however, I have discussed some aspects of this question: see my 'Regarding Immortality', *Religious Studies*, XXII (1986), 219–33; 'Dualistic and Non-Dualistic Problems of Immortality', *Philosophy East and West*, XXXV (1985), 333–50.

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KARL H. POTTER

The Naturalistic Principle of Karma

INDIAN WRITERS conversant with Western thought have compared the "Law of *Karma*" with the "Law of Causation," saying that, whereas the latter governs the physical order, the former governs the moral order.[1] In this conception several mistaken views about the so-called "Law of Causation" are apparent.

In the first place, the phrase "the Law of Causation" is highly misleading. There are two well-known senses of "law," and in neither one does the doctrine under discussion, viz., "every event has a cause," state a law. The "Law of Causation" is not a prescriptive law, since a prescriptive law presupposes a lawgiver. If there were a lawgiver for the "Law of Causation," it presumably would have to be God. But consider a God who promulgates the Causal Law "Every event must have a cause." Why should he promulgate such a law? A prescriptive law is intended to compel people to act or restrain people from acting in certain ways, and this edict can do nothing of the kind. God may have created the world in such a fashion that every event indeed does have a cause, either by some necessity within the scheme or even as a result of his continuous and direct intervention, but it does not follow from that, even if it be true, that he issued a prescriptive law to that effect.

Nor is the "Law of Causation" a descriptive law. For a descriptive law, a "law of Nature" like Boyle's law, for example, is arrived at when a hypothesis is constantly confirmed and never falsified. But the "hypothesis" "every event has a cause" is not treated like ordinary hypotheses; apparent falsifications are disallowed on principle. Whereas an ordinary hypothesis is rejected when the outcome of a properly-carried-out and relevant test is negative, the causal "hypothesis" is safeguarded: if we fail to find a cause for a given event, we are advised to keep looking; we are not allowed to reject the principle.

[1] E.g., S. C. Chatterjee, *The Fundamentals of Hinduism* (Calcutta: Das Gupta & Co., 1950; reprinted 1960), pp. 72 ff.; Mysore Hiriyanna, *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy* (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1952), pp. 30–34; *Collected Papers of Professor S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri*, T. M. P. Mahadevan, ed., (Madras: University of Madras, 1961), pp. 233–238.

Thus the "Law of Causation" is not a law at all, but a principle. As such, it serves an extremely important function: it formulates a basic presupposition of scientific inquiry, since any empirical inquiry seeks for explanations, and all such explanations are in a broad sense causal.[2]

If the "Law of *Karma*" is to be thought of as parallel in function to the "Law of Causation," it, too, must be viewed as a principle, a principle which formulates a certain program for moral inquiry. As such, it, too, serves an extremely important function. For, just as the causal principle, as I shall hereafter call "Every event has a cause," exhorts us to keep on seeking explanations for physical occurrences, so the karmic principle exhorts us to keep on seeking explanations for what I shall for the moment call "moral" occurrences.

As a result, neither the "Law of Causation" nor the "Law of *Karma*" governs its respective orders, since they are both principles, i.e., exhortations or, if you prefer, programmatic decisions, and so cannot govern anything except in the sense of guiding our future inquiries.

Far from detracting from the importance of the doctrine of *karma*, these considerations underline its ultimacy for human concerns. For the fact that we are committed to the causal principle indicates our basic desire for explanations of physical occurrences, and likewise, if one is committed to the karmic principle, this shows one's desire for explanations of moral occurrences. And, although it seems prima facie that the status of a principle is inferior to that of a law, since principles are rejectable and laws are not, second thoughts will reveal that this supposed inferiority is a trivial outcome of the fact that in our language-habits we allow ourselves to speak of a rejected principle, while a rejected law is no law at all.

Why should one, however, be committed to the karmic principle? Well, why are scientists committed to the causal principle? Scientists give different answers: some see the practical advantages accruing from control of the sources of physical energy as a relevant reason; others prefer to maintain a lofty disdain for human concerns, at least while in their laboratories. Likewise, one might accept the karmic principle on the impersonal grounds that he is merely interested in the moral order and not in any applications to human conduct his investigations might afford, at least while the investigation is in progress. Scientists treasure their attitude of "objectivity" and feel that practical concerns threaten to cloud the clarity of their vision. Psychol-

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[2]The word "causal" is currently out of fashion in empiricist circles, and discussion at the moment rages over the question of an inductivist versus a deductivist account of verification and falsification. These discussions do not bear upon anything claimed here, however.

ogists, even moral philosophers, may take an equally antiseptic stance if they like. But the only result is that they separate their activities as investigators from their activities as inquiring persons with practical concerns, and by so doing take the chance that attention to those concerns may proceed as if their laboratory results do not exist. Such a view of the scientist as functioning under two hats, so to speak, seems to be the result of a failure to see that objectivity does not require suspension of practical concerns but, rather, strict observance of the canons of successful inquiry. Practical concerns generate the questions we ask; they also, in the final analysis, generate the criteria we use for deciding whether or not our questions have been answered; but neither consideration justifies the conclusion that such an inquiry is unobjective.

Just as man's predicament dictates an investigation of the sources of physical power with an eye to adjusting to or even mastering such power, so the very same predicament necessitates an investigation into the sources of moral strength with intent to master such sources of self-control as can be discovered. The karmic principle stands justified simply by our need to understand ourselves.

In effect, the karmic principle merely makes explicit a vagueness in the causal principle, a vagueness in the notion of an "event" in "Every event has a cause." We have seen that this principle might less misleadingly be phrased "Keep looking for causal explanations of all events." But what are to count as "events"? At this point the various scientific practitioners begin demarcating their respective fields. The karmic principle insists that the field of moral events not be overlooked.

The acceptance of the karmic principle is incompatible with no laws of conduct, not being a law itself. It does, however, conflict with certain alternative principles, specifically with those philosophical positions which deny the existence of moral occurrences, or, while admitting the existence of such occurrences, deny the relevance of causal explanation to them. Such views are characteristic of non-naturalism in contemporary ethical theory. Acceptance of the karmic principle requires one to adopt the position of naturalism in ethics.

The question at issue in assessing naturalism is not one of the truth or falsity of a doctrine, but, rather, one concerning the acceptability of a principle as guiding our investigative policy. As a result, some of the more superficial aspects of contemporary debate may be overlooked in favor of a more searching analysis of men's motives in denying, or affirming, that there are moral occurrences and that they are subject to causal explanation.

The motivation for the naturalist, he who espouses the karmic principle, is the same as that which motivates him to accept the causal principle: he believes that understanding the causes of any event enables him to anticipate and adjust to subsequent events of a like nature, and he further believes that anticipation of and adjustment to future events is a worth-while human concern. The naturalist fears unexplained events, for they are beyond human control. But he trusts man's ability to overcome the limitations of ignorance. Naturalism, then, posits the principle that all areas of human interest can be eventually mastered through scientific inquiry, and, since the area of moral decisions is central in human striving, he refuses to remove it from the scope of scientific investigation.

The motivation for non-naturalism may seem to stem from several sources. But the major source is the fear of explained events. The fear is that if we knew all the causes of all events we would know precisely what the future will bring, a self-stultifying and debilitating prospect. Thus, although the non-naturalist admits the wisdom of seeking causal explanations within limits, he opposes such a search in the area which lies closest to human decisions, the area of what I have been calling "moral events."

Though this is not the only professed motive for non-naturalism, other reasons for the view seem to come to much the same thing in the end. Naturalism may be opposed, for example, on the ground that human understanding, unlike God's, has intrinsic limitations, that any attempt by man to go beyond his own limits and emulate God's understanding is doomed to failure, and that rash claims on behalf of man's complete perfectibility in this regard are blasphemous. All this seems to be a rationalization of the fear noted in the previous paragraph. Why should anyone object to an investigation of any sort of events, unless he believes that such an investigation will produce some positive harm? And what sort of harm, other than the realization of the debilitating prospect mentioned above, could possibly accrue from rational inquiry, the same kind of inquiry, after all, which even the non-naturalist admits to be appropriate and desirable everywhere else except here?

Yet the problem, once recognized, is genuine enough. If non-naturalists are to be persuaded to give up their view, they will have to be convinced either (1) that complete understanding of the causes of all events will still not enable us to predict the future completely and with finality, or (2) that such complete predictive ability, far from being the stultifying prospect the non-naturalist assumes it to be, is indeed precisely the state of perfection man should aim for. The first thesis is a kind of indeterminism, the second a seem-

ingly paradoxical account of human freedom as a state in which no choice at all is open.

Among the ancient *darśanas* of India one can make out a distinction between naturalism and non-naturalism. This distinction is one which I have elsewhere called the difference between "progress philosophy" and "leap philosophy."[3] In Sanskrit the former is called "*jāti-vāda*," the latter "*ajāti-vāda*." The cleavage is fundamental. The leap philosophers, or non-naturalists, refuse to allow causal explanations as relevant to some part of human endeavors, restricting causal categories to only a part of the events which concern men. The remaining part, unamenable to rational understanding, is treated in varying ways by Indian non-naturalists. Some, e.g., Mādhyamika Buddhists and the Vivaraṇa branch of the Advaita Vedānta, postulate a second sort of understanding (often called *prajñā*) to grasp these acausal categories. Other non-naturalists take refuge in theism, for example, the Śrīvaiṣṇavite interpretation of Rāmānuja and Madhva's Dvaita. Under the impetus of what is now referred to as the "*bhakti* movement," non-naturalism of this latter sort, which features dependence on the grace of God, has become increasingly prevalent in India. The result has been that the concerns served by adherence to the karmic principle have been more and more ignored in favor of a resigned attribution to God of responsibility for human failings. In a context of non-naturalism, the "Law of *Karma*" loses its meaning as a principle and indeed takes on a strongly fatalistic flavor. That was not its original intent, however.

Readers unacquainted with the cleavage in the history of ideas in India sketched above may well be puzzled when they find Hiriyanna and Chatterjee at one and the same time disclaiming deterministic consequences for the "Law of *Karma*" and yet apparently admitting that the "Law" entails that every event is completely determined—all the while apparently failing to see the contradictions involved in these views. Suryanarayana Sastri is more insightful, seeing rightly the naturalistic implications of the "Law" and the inadequacy of the non-naturalists' answer. His own solution on behalf of naturalistic (*Bhāmatī*) Advaita is, unfortunately, not satisfactory, either. With the dubious authority of Eddington, he appeals to the principle of indeterminacy to justify indeterminism. But he, like the other two, fails to see what has been argued above, that the "Law of *Karma*" is not a law but a principle which, so long as it is maintained, commits us to seeking a deterministic

[3]See "A Fresh Classification of Indian Philosophical Systems," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXI, No. 1 (November, 1961), 25–32; the distinction is further expounded in my book *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963).

order beneath the quantum order or whatever other incompletely determined order science may arrive at through further investigation.

Meeting the non-naturalist by espousing indeterminism is to throw out the baby with the bath. In the remainder of this paper, I wish to propose an interpretation of the karmic principle which may help naturalists forge an answer along the second line mentioned above, by resolving the paradox of human freedom.

What are these "moral events" the causal explanations of which the karmic principle exhorts us to seek? I suggest that they are habits (or traces), or perhaps the sources of habituation (*saṁskāra*, *bhāvanā*, *vāsanā*).[4] It is a fact, well known to reflective men the world over, that many of the frustrations in life are due to our inability to deviate at the appropriate moment from habits built up prior to the moment of decision. This, then, is the bondage to *karma*, habit, which thwarts human freedom even when no "external" constraint is present.

The karmic principle exhorts us particularly to seek the necessary conditions of habituation. The idea is that, having discovered the kinds of events which constitute the necessary conditions of habituation, we can proceed to ensure that those kinds of events do not recur. As a result, we will be released from bondage to habits, and this release is itself a necessary condition (perhaps even a sufficient condition) for *mokṣa*, complete release from all dependence on the not-self.

When the self attains complete release it will be omniscient in the sense that it will be able to predict the state of the world at every moment in the future (and no doubt to postdict for every moment in the past). This is the conception of man's goal which the non-naturalist finds so repugnant, apparently because no choice is open to such an omniscient being. But this phrase, "no choice is open," is unclear and in need of analysis, and upon such analysis it will turn out that the non-naturalist, misled by crucial ambiguities in terms like "habit," rejects this naturalistic conception of freedom on inadequate grounds.

There are two sorts of situations in which it would be strictly appropriate to say "no choice is open to me." One is the situation where the alternatives are limited to one. The closest approximation to this situation in ordinary experience is the stock example of the man forced to give up his wallet at gunpoint, but this is, of course, strictly speaking, not a case in point since obviously one does have more than one alternative in this situation,

[4]Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–83, notes the parallels between *karma* and habit without quite identifying them.

though the other alternative—probably being shot—is very unpleasant. Now, it is reasoned, restriction of alternatives even to this extent is highly undesirable—how much worse if it were strictly true that only one alternative were open. Note how the repugnance we exhibit at being forced to do something against our will is carried over into the stricter case, although no reason is given why the description "alternatives limited to one" must be taken to apply only to cases where the "alternative" in question is contrary to our wishes.

A second situation answering strictly to "no choice is open" is the situation where indeed no choice is open, since choosing is not in point, because of the intrinsic character of the situation. An approximation to this might be found in experiences of severe depression where, since nothing seems more worth-while than anything else, choosing seems out of point and one relapses into catatonia. Again, this is not strictly a case of the situation in question, since one could well say of such a depressive, "Nevertheless, choices are open to him, including the choice not to do anything at all." Again the example is highly repellent, and this quality is easily carried over to that which it is taken to approximate. Again, note that the resignation characteristic of the catatonic is carried over into the strict case, although nothing is provided as sanction for this identification.

Now let us return to "habit." Moral advisors show a curious contrariness in their attitudes to habit. Such a counselor advises us, on the one hand, not to be a slave to habits; on the other, to develop habits. An overly regular life is bad, but so is an underregulated one. One may well suspect from this that important distinctions are being overlooked in connection with this notion. Surely we are not being advised to develop the same things we are at the same time to dispense with?

We are insufficiently clear about habituation. Western moralists tend to say here that the problem which the foregoing remarks point up is the problem of telling which habits are good and which ones bad. This way of speaking makes it sound as if there were properties of "goodness" and "badness" which characterize two distinct classes of habits, and that our problem is to classify habits into these two varieties by discovering the presence of these properties. But since one cannot assume that any observable features of habits are signs of the presence of goodness and badness—to do so would be to move from an "is" to an "ought" or to commit the "naturalistic fallacy"—the non-naturalist goes on to conclude that one must intuit the presence of these properties directly. Having intuited which habits are good, one is then exhorted to develop these habits. No causal explanations are necessary or

desirable, for the non-naturalist does not desire to eliminate habits but, rather, to develop certain ones and to abandon others.

The weaknesses in this account should be evident. First, the assumption that goodness and badness are intrinsic and mutually exclusive features of two kinds of moral occurrences is open to question. Second, the appeal to intuition is suspect, particularly when the non-naturalist is apparently unable to give any criteria for discriminating good habits from bad ones. Finally, the non-naturalist does not explain how we are to develop certain habits and abandon others without learning and utilizing causal laws concerning these habits. Note that these weaknesses have nothing to do with the move from "is" to "ought" or with the "naturalistic fallacy." The naturalist may well admit that, if it were in point to seek goodness and badness in habits, these maneuvers would be mistakes. But his position, properly understood, is that such a search is unnecessary.

The problem is not to discriminate between good and bad habits. It is, rather, to avoid habituation, i. e., to avoid losing control of one's habits. Thus the *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us that both good and bad habits bind us. Bondage, habituation, is a feature of all kinds of habits, good and bad.[5] But, fortunately, it is not an intrinsic feature.

Let us distinguish "$habituation_1$," meaning the state of behaving in a regular pattern, from "$habituation_2$," meaning the state of behaving in regulated ways determined by forces beyond one's control. Thus a regular smoker is $habituated_1$, but may or may not be $habituated_2$, depending on whether he can control his smoking as and when he wishes, e.g., whether he can stop at will for a given period.

The presence or absence of $habituation_2$, as well as of $habituation_1$, is a matter of natural fact and involves no special non-naturalistic intuition. Likewise, discovery of the necessary conditions for $habituation_2$ is a proper matter for scientific investigation; we need no occult powers to carry it out. And, finally, utilizing this discovery to free ourselves from $habituation_2$ is no different kind of problem from any other problem of applied science. Such utilization may well involve $habituation_1$. *Yoga*, for example, is the development of $habituation_1$ in order to eliminate $habituation_2$.

Now, with such a clarification of "habit" in mind, it can be seen that the naturalistic conception of freedom as man's goal is not as unpleasant a state to aim for as the non-naturalist claims it to be. Once we have seen that

[5]The *Gītā* finds three kinds of habits: good (*sattva*), passionate (*rajas*), and indifferent (*tamas*). But they all bind. See III. 5 and II. 45.

habituation need not involve loss of control to the not-self, we can see that in a state of perfect freedom we might be habituated$_1$ to the extent that "no choice is open," and yet it will not follow that someone or something else is making our choices for us. No choice is open to us in such a state precisely because we are in complete control of ourselves and thus cannot be distracted by desires arising from alien sources. We will not have resigned ourselves to external control; rather, we will have renounced choice because we will have renounced all desires arising from the not-self.

There are other principles that Indian naturalists accept as corollaries to the karmic principle. Prominent among these is the doctrine of reincarnation or transmigration of the self. In judging the worth of such a doctrine, we should first reconstrue it as a principle, assess its function as such, and then judge the other aspects as critically as we wish to. Thus, I have tried above to explain the function of the karmic principle, but I remain critical of some of the specific ways in which this principle has been rendered for popular consumption. For example, the tracing of specific effects to specific previous acts must either be independently justified through proper investigation or, if not, it must be construed as a picturesque way of reminding people of the concerns which lead them to adopt the karmic principle. In this latter guise, the doctrine of *karma* need not be taken any more seriously by thoughtful people than any similar myth.

Likewise, the doctrine of transmigration seems to be a mixture of mythical elements with an extremely important naturalistic principle. The karmic principle "keep looking for causes of habituation$_2$" requires as corollary what may be called the principle of beginninglessness, which allows us to continue exploring earlier events as possible causes for habituation$_2$ when we have run out of candidates among later events. Thus the principle of beginninglessness extends the scope of the search for causal explanations throughout time, as it were. The principle underlying transmigration includes the principle of beginninglessness and, so to speak, expands it. It allows us when exploring the causes of the habituation$_2$ of an individual inhabiting a certain space-time region to look for such causes in any and all space-time regions prior to the behavior in question.

As a result, it allows us, if we wish, to construe the history of an individual person as extending without spatial or temporal restriction. Thus, if we wish so to construe my history we could include in that history all factors which have in any way conditioned my habituation$_2$, whether such factors are located in this physical body I now possess or in another body or in no body whatsoever. Whether we wish to construe the concept of a "person" in such a way is a matter for us to decide; there are clearly drawbacks to such a way of

speaking, prominent among them the fact that it would involve a serious deviation from current usage and consequent obstruction of communication. Such drawbacks are not conclusive reasons against reforming our conceptual scheme, however. If through such a reform there were clear advantages to be gained in discovering explanations for habituation$_2$, for example, this would outweigh all other considerations for the naturalist.

It is quite possible that a thorough rethinking of the problem of personal identity along these lines would be beneficial. But seriously to construe the history of an individual person in some fashion short of complete interpenetration of his history with the histories of other individuals, at least in the absence of any further distinctions bearing upon the successful functioning of the karmic principle, is to lose sight of that principle. For this reason, one cannot seriously accept the special theory of transmigration as found in popular Indian classics, where we are told that the Buddha was a deer in a former birth, etc. However, I do not suppose that such tales are intended "seriously"; they are myths, and as such serve an indispensable function in disseminating the karmic principle and its corollaries to all mankind.

The corollary to the karmic principle which I have been discussing seems, rather than providing a basis for a more perspicuous account of personal individuality, to provide a basis for understanding to what extent we are bound to each other and to the "impersonal" environment by mutual concerns. Instead of discrete chains of events paralleling each other back through time from each of our presently functioning bodies, we must, rather, learn to think of our histories as interpenetrating fields of force (to suggest one among several models), and of the events influencing the development of those fields as being located, not in a "moral" or "spiritual" realm distinct from the physical one, but in the one world of Nature, the world studied from various angles by physics, biology, history, the arts, and religion. Love, mutual concern, is not to be considered as restricted to some non-natural realm; it can and must be investigated by all the various fields of inquiry. Furthermore, along these lines we may be able to make naturalistic sense of universal insights currently construed non-naturalistically, such as the insight that through love for others one may successfully combat habituation$_2$.

The decline of naturalism in India is particularly unfortunate, for it is Indian naturalists who have most clearly noted the consequences of that position for the ultimate goals of mankind. Western naturalists, under the influence of a shallow Humean and Millian libertarianism, have most often failed to recognize the implications of the causal principle for self-realization.

Indian philosophy is now identified with non-naturalism by practically all Western philosophers, despite its pioneering work on the naturalistic side of the ledger. One would hope to see a revival of naturalism in India, a naturalism sophisticatedly aware of developments in Western ethical theory but emphasizing the unique contributions of Indian moral teachings as classically expounded in such naturalistic texts as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra.* Such a revival would constitute a most important advance in the resolution of the deep-seated issues which divide naturalists from non-naturalists throughout the philosophical world.

What, then, are the philosophical implications of the doctrine of *karma*? The most fundamental implication is that the human predicament requires us to view our world naturalistically, i.e., as governed by discoverable regularities. Only by so viewing the world can we hope to free ourselves from the suffering which, by common consent of all Indian systems, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina, pervades our lives. It is worth noting that those Indian philosophers who have allowed themselves to suggest that the doctrine of *karma* is only a convenient fiction have tended to be either skeptics or extreme devotionalists. These latter types of philosophers characteristically abandon the traditional Indian ideal of salvation through liberation, either by outright denial of its possibility, as in the case of the skeptics, or by substituting other ideals in its place, as in the medieval ideal of slavery to God (*kaiṅkārya*).

Indeed, *karma*, the naturalistic principle, is not a doctrine with philosophical implications so much as a presupposition of what is to count as a philosophical implication. When the presupposition of *karma* is withdrawn, we quickly leave the characteristic concerns of classical Indian philosophy for the quite different concerns of medieval and modern Indian theology. The cleavage between naturalism and non-naturalism is fundamental. There is no more important choice to be made by those seeking a philosophy of life than that between these two methodological assumptions.

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ELIOT S. DEUTSCH

Karma as a "Convenient Fiction" in the Advaita Vedānta

According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous actions, bad by bad actions.[1]

Coarse and fine, many in number,
The embodied one chooses forms according to his own qualities.[2]

ACCORDING TO THE doctrine of *karma*, everyone is conditioned and determined by his conduct, as this is enacted over a period of innumerable births, deaths, and rebirths: every deed that one performs has its effect in the world and forms a tendency (*saṁskāra* or *vāsana*) within the doer which is the basis for his future deeds. *Karma* is thus the "law" which sets forth the relation that obtains between one's actions and one's state of being. "All the Indian systems," writes S. N. Dasgupta, "agree in believing that whatever action is done by an individual leaves behind it some sort of potency which has the power to ordain for him joy or sorrow in the future according as it is good or bad."[3]

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[1] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.iv.5, in R. E. Hume, trans., *Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931).

[2] *Śvestāśvatara Upaniṣad*, V.11, in *ibid.*

[3] Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 71.

To the possible objection that *karma* denies freedom to man, and is thus self-negating, M. Hiriyanna states that "to act with arbitrarily shifting motives would be to act from impulses, as many lower animals do. Hence freedom should be regarded as consisting not in unrestricted license, but in being determined by oneself. When therefore we ask whether belief in karma does not result in fatalism, all that we mean is whether it does or does not preclude self-determination. That it does not is evident, because the doctrine traces the causes which determine an action to the very individual that acts." *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1949), p. 47. Hiriyanna then goes on to note the manner in which transmigration is involved in the *karma* doctrine. He writes: "Since, however, those causes cannot all be found within the narrow limits of a single life, it [the doctrine] postulates the theory of *saṁsāra* or the continued existence of the self in a succession of lives. Thus the theory of transmigration is a necessary corollary to the doctrine of Karma" (*ibid.*).

From now on, when we use the term "*karma*" we mean to refer to the joint doctrine of the "law" of *karma*—the principle of causality which holds that all moral actions produce moral effects—and of *saṁsāra*—the principle that there is a transmigration of the self in a series of births, deaths, and rebirths.

There is perhaps no other basic doctrine in Indian philosophy which has had such a hold upon the popular thinking and practical religion of India and which, in spite of Plato's *Republic* and *Phaedo,* has met with as much resistance among Western philosophers as the doctrine of *karma.*[4] One of the reasons for this situation is that Indian philosophy for the most part has failed to make explicit and clear just what the status of this idea is. Indian philosophers, in other words, have neglected to approach the doctrine of *karma* critically. Our intention here is to take away some of the literalness from *karma* by showing that, within the framework of the Advaita Vedānta, it is necessarily a "convenient fiction": a concept which is undemonstrable but useful in interpreting human experience.[5]

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[4] It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the precise source of *karma* in the Vedic tradition or the exact point in its development when it took hold. Some scholars (e.g., A. A. Macdonnell, Sir Charles Eliot, and A. B. Keith) believe that it is essentially an un-Aryan idea, one which was taken over from the "Dravidians," while other scholars believe that it has its roots in the *Ṛg-veda* itself. R. D. Ranade, for example, with Rudolph Roth, Otto Böhtlingk, and Karl Friedrich Geldner, holds that an analysis of *Ṛg-veda* I. 164 shows that "the three chief moments in the idea of transmigration . . . are all implicitly found so far back as the time of the *Ṛg-veda;* and when these are coupled with the incipient idea of the quality of action (*dharma*) which determines a future existence, we see that there is no reason why we should persist in saying that the idea . . . [of *karma*] is an un-Aryan idea." *A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy* (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1926), p. 152.

Another view that is widely held today is that *karma* is an Upaniṣadic extension of certain underlying beliefs that were prevalent in the early Vedic sacrificial period, namely, the belief that the performance of certain ritual actions automatically brings about certain results. *Karma* is just the extension into the moral sphere of the belief in the mechanical efficacy that governs the sacrifice.

Whether *karma* has its roots in the *Ṛg-veda* or was borrowed from non-Aryan sources, or whether, again, it is but a natural extension of beliefs present in early Vedic times, is of historical importance. However, as pointed out, all the later systems of Indian thought agree that *karma* is operative in life; they disagree only as to what it is that transmigrates and as to how it takes place; that it takes place is accepted, and this alone is of philosophical importance. The differences in the "what" and "how" of *karma* are sometimes quite pronounced. According to the Vedānta, for example, it is the *sukṣma-śarīra* ("subtle body") which transmigrates under the direction of Īśvara, the Lord, who bestows the fruits of action on the individual soul. For Buddhism, on the other hand, "rebirth does not mean that the soul bodily, as an identical individual essence, transports itself from one place to another. It only means that a new series of states is generated conditioned by the previous states." T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Conception of Buddhism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955), p. 35.

[5] We are not suggesting here that Śaṁkara or other members of the Advaita school explicitly hold that *karma* is a "convenient fiction" (they, in fact, tend to affirm *karma* without any such qualification); we are concerned only to show that from the metaphysical and epistemological framework of the Advaita, the status of *karma* as a "convenient fiction" logically follows. And our choice of working within the framework of the Advaita Vedānta is based on the following: first, in dealing with a doctrine such as *karma,* which is, as pointed out, essentially alien to Western ways of thinking, it is necessary to work within the dynamics of an Indian system in which it appears and to see first of all to what extent it is justified within that system (of concepts and values); second, the Advaitic system is generally recognized among Indian thinkers to be the most fully de-

I

Following the Bhāṭṭa school of the Mīmāṁsā, the Advaita Vedānta indentifies six *pramāṇas* (means of valid knowledge). These are *pratyakṣa* (perception), *upamāna* (comparison), *anupalabdhi* (non-cognition), *anumāna* (inference), *arthāpatti* (postulation), and *śabda* (testimony). To show the undemonstrability of *karma* within the framework of the Advaita Vedānta, one has to show that *karma* cannot be secured by any of these *pramāṇas;* that *karma* cannot be established by any of the means of knowledge available to man.

In terms of *pratyakṣa* (perception), which is described by the Vedānta as the going out of the *manas* (mind) or *antaḥkaraṇa* (internal organ) through the *indriyas* (senses) to the object and the assuming of its form, it is clear that *karma* cannot be established, simply because it is not an object like a table, a tree, a pot that is available to immediate sense-experience. *Pratyakṣa* yields knowledge of the qualities of an object (like its color, size, texture) and the relations which constitute it (e.g., the universal "tableness" in the perception of a table); it does not and cannot yield knowledge of law-like relations between objects in Nature.[6]

The same holds true of *upamāna* (comparison) and *anupalabdhi* (non-cognition), which, respectively, yield knowledge as derived from judgments of similarity (that a remembered object is like a perceived one) and from judgments of absence (that a specific object is non-existent at a given time and place). Judgments founded on *upamāna* are of the sort "Y is like X," where X is an object immediately perceived and Y is an object previously perceived and now brought to consciousness in the form of a memory. Judgments founded on *anupalabdhi* are of the sort "There is no Z in this room," where Z is an object that would be perceived then and there if it did exist. Neither is of the kind: "The Law of *Karma* is operative in Nature." Although the Vedānta keeps these first three *pramāṇas* separate and distinct from each other, they do have this in common, that their fundamental origin and locus are perceptual. Now, expanding this somewhat in terms of empirical experience as a whole, it is generally recognized today that there is at least one requirement that a theory about that experience must satisfy if it can be empirically validated. One must be able to move from the theory to the data which it is about and determine by observation whether or not the theory or hypothesis does bring the data

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veloped and influential of the Indian systems, especially with regard to its metaphysics, and therefore the status of *karma* can be clarified best from within it rather than from within any one of the other *darśanas* (systems).

[6] Cf. T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Philosophy of Advaita* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1957), pp. 19 ff.

together in a confirming way. According to this basic requirement, *karma* is undemonstrable. There is no way known to us whereby one can observe one's "past life" and its effect upon one's "present life." Spinoza puts it categorically in this way: "The mind can imagine nothing, nor can it recollect anything that is past, except while the body exists."[7] And so long as one's body exists, one is confined empirically to one's "present life." One can, in principle, see if one's conduct determines one's being in one's "present life"; one can see whether or not one's actions do reverberate back into one's nature and condition one's personality; one cannot, however, as far as we know, see beyond this.[8] "As one acts, so one becomes" is, in principle, demonstrable within one's "present life." As a law which extends beyond this, it is undemonstrable; and to assert it in this form as a literal truth would involve an unjustified extrapolation from a limited phenomenal fact. In Kantian language, it would be extending a concept beyond experience.[9]

The next *pramāṇa,* or source of valid knowledge, is that of *anumāna* (inference) ; and here we need call attention only to the fact that valid inferential knowledge is obtained for the Vedānta only when a knowledge of the invariable relation (*vyāpti*) between that which is inferred (*sādhya*) and the reason or basis (*hetu*) from which the inference is made is attained. *Anumāna* is mediate knowledge based on the apprehension, which is experientially uncontradicted, of a universal agreement between two things. A valid inference requires an invariable concomitance between the major and middle terms. Now *karma* cannot be established by inference, for the simple reason that the nature of inferential reasoning in Indian philosophy precludes the possibility of a

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[7] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part V, Prop. 21.

[8] It is true, of course, that the *rāja-yogins* claim that "by bringing the residual tendencies (*saṁskāras*) into consciousness [through concentration] (*saṁyama*) the knowledge of previous lives (*pūrva-jāti*) is obtained" (*Yoga-sūtra*, III. 18) ; however, the Advaitin does not use this claim as a support for *karma*, and, even if he did, he would be faced with the difficulty, similar to that of "parapsychology" in general, of establishing new empirical laws of Nature on the basis of the "extra-sensory" perceptual experience of a privileged few. Until such time as a direct apprehension of previous life-states is obtainable in such a way that it can serve as confirming data for *karma*—insofar as *karma* involves both a causal principle and the notion of transmigration—*karma* must be held to be undemonstrated. And it must also be held to be undemonstrable, insofar as the ability to obtain this data would seem to require a different kind of person—biologically, physically—than the man we know today. When one asserts empirical undemonstrability, it is understood that one is concerned with man as he now is, and not with man as he may conceivably evolve.

[9] Swami Vivekananda says precisely the same thing when he writes, "That portion of Existence which is limited by our minds—the universe of the senses, which we can see, feel, touch, think of, imagine . . . alone is under law; but beyond it, Existence cannot be subject to law, because causation does not extend beyond the world of our minds. Anything beyond the range of the mind and the senses is not bound by the law of causation." *Karma Yoga* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1960), p. 73.

universal proposition or law being the conclusion of an inference. It might be the result of induction, but not of deduction.[10]

Apart from the *pramāṇa* of inference as such, there is one further notion of rational demonstration implicit in the Advaita Vedānta. An idea or doctrine may be regarded as demonstrated if it "coheres" with or follows from the basic metaphysical principles of the Vedānta, and if its denial involves consequences which are self-contradictory.[11] According to the Upaniṣadic philosophy, where *karma* (in the Brāhmaṇic tradition) is first explicitly formulated, and, as interpreted by the Advaita, the super-personal "oneness of being" (*Brahman*) as it is in itself and as it is manifest as the ground of the human being (*Ātman*), is alone fully real and is thus the sole "truth." All other dimensions and interpretations of experience have only a relative or provisional existence and truth value. And *karma,* according to this philosophy, cannot be applied to this oneness. "It must be clearly understood," writes Swami Nikhilananda, "that this doctrine cannot be applied to the Soul, or Ātman, which is, in Its true nature, beyond birth and death, and unaffected by time, space, and the law of causation. It [*karma*] has reference only to the jiva, or embodied soul. It belongs to what is called the 'inferior knowledge' (aparā vidyā), by which one seeks to explain the relative world, and not to the 'superior knowledge' (parā vidyā), which is the science of Ātman."[12] In short, then, *karma* is only a "relative idea"; and it does not follow from the real nature of being. Its necessity is not logically implied by the metaphysical principles of the Advaita, and its denial does not lead to consequences which are self-contradictory.[13] *Karma,* therefore, when looked upon as a rational concept or idea as distinct from an empirical, scientific theory, is not demonstrated, and, within the Advaita Vedānta, it is rationally undemonstrable.

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[10] The Vedānta holds that the universal proposition (*vyāpti*) must be the conclusion, not of the inference, but of an induction by simple enumeration. Two things may be taken as universally related, on this model of induction, when in our experience there is no exception to their relatedness. And here it is clear that *karma* cannot even be a genuine *vyāpti,* for the consequences of moral action, as affecting the actor over a period of innumerable births, are largely unseen, and hence cannot be seen to be in uncontradicted relatedness to the actions. Induction, and hence ultimately inference, for the Advaita, depends on perception and can extend no further than drawing out the implications of the relations based on perception.

It is interesting to note in this connection that any so-called "Law of Nature" must for the Vedānta be a kind of "heuristic principle" or something which is "probable truth" rather than something which can be established as such by logic.

[11] Cf. Śaṁkara, *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya,* II.ii.10.

[12] Introduction to Śaṁkara, *Ātmabodha,* Swami Nikhilananda, trans. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1947), p. 35.

[13] An example of an idea that would be rationally demonstrated within the framework of the Advaita might be the very statement that all truths other than *"Ātman-Brahman"* are necessarily partial, relative, and incomplete. This idea follows directly from the assertion of *Brahman* as the oneness that includes and transcends all sense-mental experience.

Closely related to *anumāna,* yet separate from it according to Vedāntic epistemology, is the *pramāṇa* known as *arthāpatti* (postulation), and according to some interpreters of the Vedānta, *karma* can be justified by this mode of knowledge. Dharmarāja, the author of the classic Advaitic treatise on epistemology, writes:

Arthāpatti consists in the postulation, by a cognition which has to be made intelligible, of what will make that intelligible . . . e.g., since in the absence of eating at night, the fatness of one who does not eat by day is unintelligible, that kind of fatness is what is to be made intelligible; or else, since in the absence of eating by night there is unintelligibility . . . eating by night is what makes that intelligible.[14]

In other words, *arthāpatti* is the assuming or postulating of some fact in order to make another fact intelligible. In the example cited, apart from possible inadequacies in the physiology, if one observes that a man is fasting during the day but continues to gain weight, one must assume that he is eating at night, for there is no other way to reconcile fasting and the gaining of weight. D. M. Datta, in expositing *arthāpatti,* states that "the assumption . . . is justified and is a valid piece of knowledge . . . because the fact assumed is the only one that can explain" and that "all necessary and indispensable suppositions such as . . . the law of karma necessary for explaining the otherwise inexplicable good and bad luck of persons . . . are cases of *arthāpatti.*"[15]

But *karma* is not justified by this *pramāṇa,* for it does not fulfill the requirement of uniqueness. *Karma* is not the only possible supposition to account for the good and bad luck of persons (i.e., the differences in their moral, intellectual, spiritual capacities), as indeed many others (e.g., divine predestination or naturalistic hereditary factors) have been put forward and have been capable of generating strong belief. *Karma* is thus not established by *arthāpatti*: it is not the only way by which inequalities can be made intelligible.

The last *pramāṇa* accepted by Advaita Vedānta is *śabda* (testimony). It refers in general to the validity of one's accepting as true that information which one receives from a "reliable" person or "expert." In the Advaita, the term "*śabda*" is used primarily with respect to *Śrūti,* the Vedic scripture, and more specifically to what is said in the Upaniṣads. Again, without tracing the historical and psychological complexities involved in this belief in the authority of the Veda, it is necessary to call attention only to certain central facts, namely, that for the Advaita, as for the other "orthodox systems," the appeal to *Śruti* is not without its qualifications and that the appeal itself is based ultimately on

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[14] *Vedāntaparibhāṣā,* V. 1-2, S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, trans. (Madras: Adyar Library, 1942).

[15] *The Six Ways of Knowing* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1960), pp. 240-241, 246.

accepting the insights obtained through spiritual experience. One need not read far in "orthodox" philosophical literature before realizing that some curious principles of scriptural exegesis are used to support ideas that, in many cases, have little direct relation to the text. More often than not, the principle of looking for a "secondary meaning" of a statement, rather than accepting the primary or obvious one, is adopted and is used to harmonize the statement with one's own philosophical position. Further, it is the rare Advaitin indeed who would hold to a scriptural utterance if it directly contradicted empirical or rational experience.[16] Scriptural authority is accepted only for those truths which transcend reason and the senses and are derived from spiritual experience. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya rightly points out that "for purposes of philosophy, we may generally substitute in place of faith in scriptures, spiritual experience."[17] And even here the acceptance of the spiritual experience embodied in the Veda is not so much a question of simply believing in it, as it is whether or not the acceptance is a means for the attaining of one's self-realization. Śaṁkara himself states that "the existence of such objects as scripture, etc., is due to empirical existence which is illusory. . . . Scripture [and the distinction between] teacher and taught is illusory and exists only as a means to the realization of Reality."[18]

In terms of spiritual experience an idea may be considered demonstrated or validated for the Advaita only if, phenomenologically, it describes a "content" of that experience. The Upaniṣads, according to the Advaitic interpretation, make clear-cut distinctions between ignorance (*avidyā*) and spiritual knowledge (*vidyā*), relative or finite existence (*māyā*) and the fullness of being (*Brahman*), bondage (*bandha*) and freedom (*mokṣa*). When one attains freedom and intuitive insight or self-knowledge, *karma,* as well as all other aspects of phenomenal experience, disappears from consciousness and no longer applies as a truth of one's being.[19] Spiritual experience, for the Advaitin, is experience of unity or identity: one cannot experience sequential time—past, present, future—when one is in a state of being that transcends all categories of time (*nirvikalpa samādhi; turīya*). *Karma,* therefore, cannot be a content of spiritual experience.

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[16] Cf. Śaṁkara, *Gītā-bhāṣya,* XVIII.86.

[17] *Studies in Philosophy,* Vol. I (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1956), p. 95.

[18] Commentary on *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā,* IV.73.

[19] In the Advaitic interpretation, the *jīvanmukta,* the man liberated in life, has completely destroyed all the acculumated effects of actions done in the past which have not yet borne fruit. This is called *"sanchita-karma"*; it is distinguished from *āgāmi-karma,* actions to be performed in the future, and from *prārabdha-karma,* actions done in the past which have already begun to bear fruit. *Prārabdha-karma* can never be fully obliterated; for the *jīvanmukta,* however, it merely runs out its course without affecting him. (Cf. *Brahma-sūtra,* III.iii.27; IV.i.5.)

Karma is undemonstrated and is for the Advaita Vedānta undemonstrable, and hence, logically, it has the status of a "fiction."[20] It remains for us to determine its "convenience" or "usefulness" in interpreting human experience.

II

If we put ourselves in the place of the Upaniṣadic *gurus,* we can see that they were confronted with several practical-philosophical problems related to teaching their students the way to *mokṣa,* and that it was precisely these problems that gave rise to their acceptance of *karma.* The first problem was that of working out a definition or conception of *mokṣa* (freedom). In practically every Vedāntic text *mokṣa* is defined in terms of liberation from bondage (*bandha*), and one of the central concepts employed in the notion of bondage is that of *karma.* But what is the necessity, one may ask, of defining freedom in terms of a bondage grounded in *karma?* The Upaniṣadic answer seems to be that, except for the very few for whom the Advaita comes naturally, as it were, an awareness of being in bondage is necessary to inspire one to make the quest for freedom,[21] and that *karma* provides a ready means for instilling this awareness. *Karma* can be acknowledged with but little imagination to be operative in life: it is far easier to talk about, and convince another of, the lasting effect of his actions than it is, for instance, to talk about the binding nature of his ideas, concepts, and language itself. Everyone can become aware of motives based on desire (*kāma*) which lead to acts and decisions that have moral consequences. *Karma* is thus employed for formulating a definition of bondage which itself is necessary for formulating a conception of freedom.

Closely related to this first problem, and of more specific concrete application, is the problem of moral preparation. The Upaniṣadic sages were aware that there are moral prerequisites to the study of philosophy. Purity of heart, self-control, renunciation of sensuous pleasures, etc., are necessary for one who aspires to enlightenment.[22] The second problem, then, was: How can men be persuaded to live a moral life? One of the best answers to this problem is *karma.* If men feel that a tremendous importance is attached to every moral act and decision, that whatever they do will yield results that have an influence on the entire nature of their being, now and in the future, they will think twice

[20] By "fiction," in this context, we do not mean a concept or theory which is necessarily false; rather, a concept or theory may be called a fiction when it is undemonstrable, when it is impossible to determine its truth or falsehood, or when, in the language of the Vedānta, it cannot be established by any of the *pramāṇas.*

[21] "There, so long as the nature of salvation is not definitely ascertained specifically, in whom would any desire for that rise up." Madhusūdana Sarasvati, *Vedāntākalpalatikā,* R. D. Karmarkar, trans. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962), p. 13.

[22] E.g., *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* I.ii.2; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* II.17; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* V.2.

about leading anything other than a moral life. Salvation consists in enlightenment; morality is necessary to enlightenment; he who acts otherwise is doomed to *saṁsāra*. Śaṁkara bears out this "convenient" interpretation when he states that, "unless a person is aware of the existence of a future life, he will not feel inclined to attain what is good in this life and avoid what is evil. For there is the example of the materialist."[23]

The sages of the Upaniṣads were also no doubt aware of the fact that there is an enormous distance that most persons must cover before they are even prepared to pursue a life of the spirit; and, also, that, having once embarked upon the spiritual quest, any number and kind of failures result. It just does not seem possible that one life is sufficient for most men to attain *mokṣa*. Many persons, no matter how hard they try, no matter how devoted they are to the quest, actually attain very little. How, then, the *gurus* must have asked, can we avoid discouragement and retreat among our students? The doctrine of *karma* solves this difficulty directly. No effort goes to waste. What one cannot attain in this life, one will attain, or be better prepared to attain, in another life.[24]

The last problem for which *karma* offers a solution is the one most frequently pointed to: the problem of inequality and evil, of why there are such great differences among men in spiritual and mental capacity, or why men occupy such different places within the socio-economic order. The experience that the sages had with their students led them to the obvious conclusion that some were spiritually and intellectually more gifted than others. This is a simple fact. Some men are, in actuality, incapable of philosophical understanding (*vijñāna*) and spiritual insight (*jñāna*); other men have a natural talent for these attainments. The doctrine of *karma* provides a useful answer to this problem. The spiritual and intellectual differences between *jīvas* are due to their conduct. Their capacity, or the place in society which they occupy, at any one time is the result of their past action. "Evil," then, is to be accounted for strictly in terms of the individual's own experience. One gets what one deserves, as it were, in terms of one's past and present conduct. Suffering, misfortune, ignorance, cannot be traced ultimately to anything outside of the conditions of individual human experience itself.[25]

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[23] Śaṁkara, Introduction to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, in Swami Nikhilananda, trans., *The Upanishads*, Vol. III (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957).

[24] E.g., the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chap. VI, verses 37-41, which tells about what happens to the man who involuntarily falls away from the path of *yoga*.

[25] It is generally believed among Indian thinkers, not only that *karma* provides a solution to the problem of evil, but also that it does so in a manner superior to any other. The well-known difficulties of the typical "theistic" position—that it is unintelligible how an all-good and all-powerful God can permit evil—are acknowledged, and the typical "naturalistic" solution, which emphasizes the conditioning role of environment, that environmental factors more than anything else make for the disparity between individuals, is thought to be a mere transferring of the problem to a different place without resolving it as such.

But here a strong objection may be raised, namely, that *karma,* rather than being a convenient fiction, is in fact a highly inconvenient one. Those who hold this view argue that the acceptance of *karma* makes for a kind of apathy in one's basic attitudes toward life and toward social welfare; that, although the doctrine itself affirms the possibility of change, "it is open to one to remake his life and that the future is not a finished product like the past." Nevertheless, in practice, it encourages a tendency to give up in the face of the enormous burden of one's past experience. It is easier to accept one's position, one's behavior as governed by one's predispositions, than it is to change it, and *karma* readily supports this attitude.[26] Further, it provides a too-easy excuse for maintaining existing social ills and inequities. *Karma* has served, and continues to serve, as a sanction for the caste system—and the terrible injustices of this system, especially with regard to the "Scheduled Castes," have been pointed out frequently enough not to have to be mentioned again.

A moralist or sociologist could thus present a strong case for showing the social inconvenience of *karma.* It is not our purpose here to agree or to disagree with this appraisal, as it is largely irrelevant to the question of the logical status of *karma.* We have attempted to show only that, on the basis of the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions of the Advaita Vedānta, the doctrine of *karma* is undemonstrable, and that the doctrine was used by the Upaniṣadic *gurus* with the expectation that it would resolve certain special problems that arise within the context of a philosophical practice which aspires to the realization of self-knowledge and freedom.

[26] As suggested, however, this is, at least in theory, too mechanical an interpretation of *karma,* and is thus a misinterpretation. *Karma* does not dictate the precise nature of a future activity; it provides only the general tendency toward the performance of various activities. It is assumed, in other words, that the individual does have the power to choose his actions and to determine his own future.

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NOTES TOWARDS A CRITIQUE OF BUDDHIST KARMIC THEORY

Western Buddhology, the responsible scholarly study of Buddhist languages, history and ideas, is now more than a century and a half old. For most of that time scholars working in this field have been primarily concerned to understand and expound their sources, not to criticize or assess the views found therein, much less to make any attempt at deciding whether the central views of Buddhist philosophers are likely to be true statements of the way things are. There are good reasons for this restriction; before a given set of philosophical views can be assessed it must be understood, and in the case of Buddhism the gaining of such understanding has involved the collective philological labours of several generations of scholars and is still in many respects in its infancy. What is the case for the scholarly community as a whole is magnified for the individual working in this field; the effort involved in becoming competent in several Buddhist canonical languages and in becoming familiar with a range of philosophical ideas and preconceptions which are in many respects alien to one's own culture tends to mean that the Buddhologist's apprenticeship is long, his publications so clogged with jargon as to be inaccessible to any non-specialist, and his appetite for truth stifled by Sanskrit syntax and Tibetan declensions. There is the added problem that the Western intellectual who makes the study of Buddhism his avocation is likely to be, in some more or less well defined sense, a Buddhist; and the dangers of making religious commitment the major motivation for scholarly study have been so amply illustrated by Christian history that they scarcely need rehearsing here.

The upshot of all this is that there has as yet been little or no responsible effort at assessing the truth-claims of Buddhist philosophy. There has been, and continues to be, much apologetic and polemic from both Christians and Buddhists, but little of this is of any philosophical value. The Christian version often tends to amount to little more than reviling Buddhism because it is not Christianity, which is somewhat like reviling a cat because it is not a dog. The Buddhist version is more likely to begin by denying that Buddhists make any truth-claims in the first place and then to continue by gently criticizing Christians for making truth-claims which are less true than those Buddhists supposedly do not make. The mid-point between these two extremes, usually adopted by mystically inclined Jesuits on the one hand and

gnomic Zen adepts on the other (never, of course, by representatives of those traditions, Christian or Buddhist, which place a high value upon the ability of language to make true statements about things: e.g. Theravādin Abhidhammikas, Biblically centred neofundamentalists and so on) is to claim that of course there are no real differences between Christianity and Buddhism (or, for that matter, between either of these and Vedānta, Sufism, Taoism or what you will), and that the apparent differences are just that – apparent, to be dissolved in the higher (usually ineffable) unity of mystical experience.

There is no space here to subject any of these positions to the criticism they all richly deserve. The object of this paper is different: first, to suggest that most kinds of Buddhist philosophy do in fact make stateable and assessable truth-claims, and that those which do not are either incoherent or uninteresting, like the more extreme versions of Prasaṅgika Mādhyamika,[1] secondly, to suggest that the time is now more than ripe for the Western scholarly community, and in particular the fledgling Western Buddhological community, to begin the enterprise of assessing these truth-claims. And third, to offer some notes towards such assessment in one key area of Buddhist philosophy – karmic theory. I do not, of course, wish to underestimate the difficulties of performing the task of assessing the truth-claims of a conceptual system of such a high order of complexity, especially one which originated in a culture radically different from our own. But there seems theoretically no reason why the task cannot be performed; truth is truth and nonsense nonsense, whether stated in Sanskrit, Tibetan or English.

One important presupposition behind this enterprise should be made clear at this point. This is the idea that a necessary condition for the truth of any conceptual system is that it be rational. Religious conceptual systems cannot escape from this requirement any more than can scientific, economic, sociological or other systems.[2] Of course, both 'rationality' and 'truth' are themselves complex ideas, and it can be no part of this paper to give them any extensive discussion. It will have to be sufficient to say that the enterprise of assessing the truth-claims inherent in any given complex conceptual system proceeds largely by falsification rather than verification; that if such a system is irrational either in the strong sense of being self-contradictory or in the various weaker senses of being contradicted by well-established data available to us on other grounds, or of failing to explain the data it was constructed to explain, and so on, then it is either false or useless; and that therefore – as

[1] The thesis that Prasaṅgika Mādhyamika is both uninteresting and incoherent – at least in its Nāgārjunian form – is clearly not uncontroversial. There is no space to defend it here; it will have to suffice to say that any conceptual system which creates an unbridgeable gulf between language and reality runs the risk of emptying even assertions about emptiness of meaning.

[2] To cry with a Tertullian or a Kierkegaard *credo quia absurdum* solves no problems; why then believe one absurdity rather than another, or why not, with Lewis Carroll, make it a habit to believe six impossible things before breakfast? More rationally and more interestingly we should say with Anselm *credo ut intelligam*.

we have already noted – rationality is a necessary condition for truth.[1] Without precisely defining all the ramifications of 'rationality', then, our approach in this paper will be to construct a number of propositions which are either explicitly stated or implied by Buddhist karmic theory. These propositions will then be tested by the following four questions:[2] firstly, does the proposition in question exhibit logical inconsistency, self-referential incoherence, or any other variety of contradiction? Secondly, is the proposition in question either confirmed or falsified by any relevant well-established data available to us on other grounds? Thirdly, does the proposition in question provide an adequate and powerful explanation of the data it was constructed to explain? Fourthly, are there phenomena which lie within the relevance-range of the proposition in question with which it cannot cope? Clearly it will not be necessary to apply all of these questions to each derived proposition. The questions are organized in approximate order of decisiveness and ease of application: it should be fairly easy to decide whether a given proposition is self-contradictory, and if it should turn out to be so then nothing more needs to be said; it is necessarily false. On the other hand, if a given proposition gets by both questions one and two it may often be difficult to decide whether it provides an adequate and powerful explanation of the data it was constructed to explain or just what its relevance-range should be.[3] It is here that the sensitivity and creativity of the individual philosopher come into play.

To return to Buddhist karmic theory. Karma is of central importance for the whole of Buddhism; its functions are many and its links to other areas of Buddhist doctrine proliferate to such an extent that a full consideration of all the ramifications of Buddhist karmic theory would amount to a complete analysis of Buddhism *per se*. That is not what I intend to undertake here. Neither do I intend to undertake the complex expository exercise of indicating how and why Buddhist schools differ from each other in this area; such an exercise would be of interest to the Buddhologist but not to the philosopher, and the intent of this paper is largely philosophical. It should be noted, though, that there are significant and substantial differences between the schools on such topics as the nature of the agent who both performs acts and enjoys their results; the mechanism by which karmic effect operates; and the nature of action itself. Such differences indicate that this area was not free of problems for Buddhist theoreticians, and points to an

[1] Not, of course, a sufficient condition. Many rational conceptual systems have the disadvantage of being false. But there is no space here to explore further the asymmetry between rationality and truth.

[2] These questions are freely adapted from the axioms of assessment developed by Keith Yandell in 'Religious Experience and Rational Appraisal', *Religious Studies*, x, pp. 173–87. My grateful thanks are due to Professor Yandell for his encouragement and stimulus in the writing of this paper.

[3] Yandell, *op. cit.* p. 186.

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area of weakness in the wider conceptual framework we call 'Buddhism'.[1] Leaving these issues aside I wish to distinguish firstly the major *functions* that karmic theory serves within Buddhism as a whole, and then to discuss the significant *truth-claims* that are associated with these functions, using as a framework for assessment the four questions already stated. Before setting out it should be stressed once again that everything said in this paper will move on a fairly high level of generality, and that not all the statements made about the functions of, and truth-claims involved in, karmic theory will be applicable to the views of all Buddhist philosophers who have worked in this area. Nevertheless, enough of what follows applies to enough of what is said by Buddhists to be useful.

To begin with, then, I wish to distinguish three major functions that karmic theory serves in Buddhism. The first is to act as an explanatory cosmogonic hypothesis; that is, for Buddhists what created the material universe is karma, the volitional acts of sentient beings.[2] The second function of karmic theory is to act as an explanatory hypothesis for the varied states and conditions of sentient beings; that is, karmic theory claims to explain why you are neither a worm nor a Buddha and why worms are different from both Buddhas and you. Further, restricting our enquiry to mankind, it claims to explain why some members of this class of sentient beings are born prosperous, healthy, intelligent and creative, and why others are born deformed, crippled and full of hatred, destined to die in a variety of painful ways before they reach maturity. The third function of karmic theory, and perhaps the most important for Buddhists in practice, is that of acting as a means of social control in Buddhist societies. That is, it explains why the layman ought to support the monk and why he ought to live a moral life; it explains why the monk should keep the manifold precepts of the *vinaya*, the Buddhist code of monastic discipline, and why he ought to meditate and perform acts of selfless generosity towards other beings. To put this another way: karmic theory has the dual function of acting as a powerful mechanism for regulating and enforcing the essentially hierarchical structure of Buddhist societies and of providing a rationale for Buddhist soteriological practice, which in turn depends largely upon one's place in the hierarchical society. It should be clear that there is a considerable overlap between these three functions of Buddhist karmic theory. The classification offered here is only for heuristic purposes and is not meant to be taken too seriously; neither is it offered as a complete account of all the functions served by karmic theory in Buddhism, mereely as a suggestion about the most important ones.

We should now turn to a consideration of the significant truth-claims

[1] A good introduction to the major differences between the Buddhist schools on this issue may be found in Étienne Lamotte's 'Le Traité de l'Acte de Vasubandhu', *Mélanges Chinoise et Bouddhiques*, IV (1935–6), 151–263. Standard Buddhist discussion of the problem may be found in the fourth chapter of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, and in the same author's *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*.

[2] *Abhidharmakośa* 4.1.

associated with these three functions. To take the cosmogonic function first: for those schools of Buddhism which accept the reality and externality of the material universe,[1] karma is stated to be the means by which such a real external universe came into existence. If we accept the standard definition of karma as 'volition and that which is effected by it',[2] and realize that volition can be properly predicated, according to Buddhist theory, only of sentient beings, or, to put this in terms with which Buddhists would be more at home, volition is a momentarily existing event which can occur only within a stream of momentarily existing events which has the characteristic of sentience, then (at least) the following propositions can be formulated as intended or implied by this first function of Buddhist karmic theory:

P1: The material universe (i.e. everything that is not sentient) has as necessary and sufficient condition for both its existence and its nature the volitional actions of sentient beings.
P2: The origin of this material universe occurred at a particular time *T*, at which time sentient beings already existed.

These are not the only propositions that could be derived from the first function of Buddhist karmic theory previously outlined. But they do indicate an important area wherein truth-claims are made by Buddhist karmic theory, so we may begin by applying our four questions to these propositions. Before doing so, though, it should be noted that that for Buddhists karmic theory is never concerned with the origin of sentience or volition, but only with the origin of the material universe. The origin of sentience is not a problem for Buddhists because of their basic assumption[3] that the power or causal efficacy of karma is without beginning. The point of this basic belief cannot be discussed here, but it is important to realize that the two questions of the origin of the material universe and the origin of sentience are quite separate for Buddhists, and we are dealing here only with the former.

In applying our first question to P1 and P2, that of logical consistency, it seems clear that the propositions as they stand do not exhibit any of the characteristics of self-contradiction. They cannot be rejected on that ground.

The application of our second question to these propositions yields rather more interesting results, for we do have relevant well-established data available to us which bears on these issues. Scientific investigation of the nature and age of our material universe leads us to the reasonably well-established conclusion that it is several thousand million years old, and that life forms capable of volitional action did not appear anywhere in it until at least several hundred million years subsequent to its origin. Leaving aside

[1] Theravāda, Vaibhāṣika and most other so-called Hīnayāna schools.
[2] cetanā tatkṛtaṃ ca tat. *Abhidharmakośa* 4.1 c–d.
[3] Also properly basic in Plantinga's sense. Cf. Alvin Plantinga, 'Is Belief in God Properly Basic?', *Nous*, XV (March 1981), 41–51.

the problem that we have as yet no well-established theory as to the way in which the material universe came into being, we must note that P2 is falsified by this scientific data, and that P1 is also falsified if we reject (as we should) the idea of retroactive causality. Further, and negatively, we have no good reason to believe that volitional action can affect the structure of the material universe in other than superficial ways, much less that such action could have given rise to the material universe *in toto*. The conclusion would seem to be that both P1 and P2 are false. The Buddhist may reply: but there are sentient beings existing in other universes of which you know nothing, and it may further be the case that such beings existed prior to the origin of this particular material universe and that it was their volitional action which gave rise to it. To which the answer can only be: it is not incoherent to suggest such a thing,[1] but apart from the witness of the Buddhist sacred texts we have about as much reason to think that such is the case as we have to think that the origin of the material universe is the work of the Great Pumpkin. The conclusion must be that the well-established data to which we have access from scientific study of the nature of the universe makes it extremely likely that both P1 and P2 are false, and therefore Buddhist karmic theory *per se*, the conceptual system of which these propositions are a part, must be concomitantly weakened.[2]

The second function of Buddhist karmic theory that we distinguished was that of acting as an explanatory hypothesis for the varied states and conditions of sentient beings. We should now try to formulate the truth-claims inherent in this function. The following are likely candidates:

P3: Each individual undergoes more than one life.

P4: The parameters of possibility for any given individual – i.e. whether he will be crippled or healthy, intelligent or stupid, tall or short, but not the details of what he will do or achieve – are set for him at the instant of conception and are a direct result of his actions in previous lives.

P5: There is no undeserved suffering.

Once again, more propositions than these could be derived, and those given above could be phrased differently. Nevertheless, propositions P3–P5 bring us close to the heart of Buddhist karmic theory, showing its intimate and

[1] And this is pretty much what Buddhists do suggest with their system of multi-layered universes, parallel worlds, and periodic emanations of the physical universe from a state of quiescence. Cf. *Abhidharmakośa*, ch. 3, and the interesting refutation of the view that the material universe was created by God in the bhāṣya ad. 2.64.

[2] The Buddhist would further argue that direct perception of these and other realms, and of the sentient beings in them, is available to anyone who wishes to undertake the necessary meditative disciplines. There is no space here to enter upon the vitrues and problems of the argument from *yogipratyakṣa* – the perceptions of the spiritual virtuoso. We shall simply note that this is a dubious argument because of the tremendous variety of – often incompatible – systems witnessed to by the perceptions of spiritual virtuosi from different times and different cultures.

necessary connection with some kind of rebirth doctrine. In an attempt to do justice to each of these propositions we shall treat them individually.

Let us first apply our questions to P3: is this a self-contradictory proposition? The answer depends largely upon the definition of 'individual' used; it seems clear that if we take 'life' to mean simply that period from birth (or, as Buddhists would prefer, from conception) to death, and if we take 'individual' to mean something like 'an entity characterized by memory, continuity of physical identity, recognizable character traits...', then P3 is incoherent simply because part of our definition of what it is to be an individual is that such an entity should have continuity of physical identity, i.e. the same body, and we know that after death the body rapidly ceases to exist in any recognizable form. But this may be loading the conceptual dice too heavily; although it is true that there are severe problems with the idea of 'the same person' inhabiting successive bodies – at what point is such an individual no longer 'the same person'? – and that we have not yet arrived at any satisfactory definition of personal identity, we may allow that the proposition 'each individual undergoes more than one life' is not precisely self-contradictory. There is the further problem that what Buddhists mean by 'individual' and what we tend to mean by it are not the same. For a Buddhist, an individual person is an ongoing stream of momentary events, usually divided into five 'heaps' or *skandhas* which have a merely illusory unity and permanence, and on this view death is merely one more event in the continuum, of no inherently greater importance than a night's sleep. Contra Wittgenstein, for the Buddhist death precisely is an event in life and is lived through because it is simply a caused event in a given continuum which itself causes the next event. So for the Buddhist to assert P3 is to assert that every continuum continues.

Bearing these considerations in mind the Buddhist might wish to reformulate P3 in the following terms:

P3′: Any given caused continuum of momentary states exhibiting sentience (i.e. an 'individual') does not cease with death.[1]

By framing the proposition in these terms the Buddhist points out that the continuity across lives indicated by our P3 is merely a caused continuity, and that any tendency to postulate a more substantial 'something' which dies and is reborn is merely some variety of the personalist (*pudgalavāda*) heresy.

We may allow, I think, that P3′, like P3, is not precisely self-contradictory though from it the following questions arise: Buddhist texts – and Buddhists – frequently talk as though they mean to assert P3 rather than P3′. This is especially often the case when Buddhist karmic theory is being used as a means of social control, to explain to people why they should follow the Buddhist path and why they should observe the five basic precepts of

[1] This proposition leaves out of account what happens when nirvāṇa is reached.

Buddhist ethics. It is easy to see why: if you want to persuade someone that killing is not a good idea because of the suffering undergone by the killer as inevitable retribution, then P3 is a much more powerfully persuasive tool than P3′. A strong sense of identity across lives – much stronger than mere causal continuity – is required when Buddhist karmic theory is used as a means of social control. But when philosophically pressed, or when thinking about the fundamental *anātman* doctrine, Buddhist philosophers tend to retreat to P3′. On this view P3 becomes an *upāya*, an expedient to educate those who cannot understand or assimilate the implications of P3′, and an expedient which is ultimately untrue. Leaving aside for the moment the pedagogical, ethical and philosophical implications of using falsehood as an educational tool, we should look a little more closely at whether, and to what extent, P3′ really asserts anything different from P3.

We have seen that P3′ asserts that continuity of identity across lives is merely on the level of causal continuity. It is important to realize that for Buddhists, exactly the same is true of continuity of identity within a single life. That is, for any given individual, to say that he is 'the same individual' means simply that each momentarily existing state of affairs within the continuum labelled 'individual *x*' is caused by the immediately preceding momentary state of affairs within that same continuum, and itself causes the immediately subsequent momentary state of affairs within that same continuum. There is no space in Buddhist theory for any stronger sense of personal identity either within one life or across many. The Buddhist assertion of P3′ rather than P3, then, simply says that the nature and extent of personal continuity and personal identity through many lives is qualitatively no different from the nature and extent of personal continuity and identity within one life. But this is clearly not the case. Even for a Buddhist, a particular continuum (i.e. 'individual') has certain characteristics in a given life (the same body, continuity of memory and so on) which are lacking after that continuum has been interrupted by death. The events in the continuum after death (i.e. 'the reborn person') lack so many of the characteristics of the events in the continuum before death (i.e. 'the person in his previous life') that it is very much a moot point whether it makes any sense to refer to the continuum before death and the continuum after death as 'the same' except in so far as they are causally linked. We may note that this is a problem of which the Buddhists themselves have been, and are, acutely aware.[1] Without memory, continuity of physical identity, continuing character traits and so on, does it really make any sense to talk of 'the same individual' undergoing a multiplicity of lives?

It seems, then, that the assertion of P3′ rather than P3 does not save the

[1] There are extensive and acrimonious debates to be found in Buddhist philosophical literature on the nature of the continuity between the agent (*kartṛ*) of an act and the enjoyer (*bhoktṛ*) of its result. A good summary may be found in the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*.

Buddhist from his dilemma. For P3 to be both true and useful as a means of social control a much stronger concept of personal identity must be used than the standard no-self doctrine will allow. P3 must therefore be rejected as inconsistent with other significant Buddhist doctrines as well as on the ground of its incoherence when formulated in accordance with Buddhist views of the nature of personality.[1] For P3′ to be true, moreover, it must be the case that the kind of continuity perceptible and experienceable in a single continuum through many lives is essentially the same as that perceptible and experienceable in a single continuum within one life. And yet it seems clear, as we have seen, that this is simply false: we have many criteria for personal identity which apply within one life and which do not apply across lives – and in practice Buddhists agree that this is the case. Thus, by our second criterion for rationality, that of whether we have well-established data available to us on other grounds which would falsify the proposition in question, P3′ is to be rejected. We have also noted that if P3′ is true, then Buddhist karmic theory as a whole cannot effectively be used in one of the major ways in which Buddhists do in fact use it – as a means of social control. Neither P3, asserted by unreflective Buddhists or by those versed in the dialectics of *upāya* and the two-truth system, nor P3′, asserted by Buddhists in philosophical mood, will stand criticism. Both must be rejected as false.

One of the standard moves at this point is to argue that we know P3 to be true because the Buddha, and all enlightened men, have directly perceived it to be the case. The canonical descriptions of the Buddha's enlightenment experience tell us that he not only remembered all his own previous lives but also saw, with his divine eye, the continuous rise and fall, death and rebirth, of all sentient beings, and was moved by the sight to great compassion. Some kind of atemporal perception seems to be what is envisaged, and the impression one gets from the texts is that in enlightenment one stands altogether outside the temporal process and can perceive simultaneously all kinds of events that are widely separated in time. While we have to admit, I think, that such a perception is a theoretical possibility, argument from it cannot bear very much philosophical weight. It does little to answer the fundamental objections to P3 and P3′ which we have noted; no matter what the Buddha may or may not have perceived, if his claimed perceptions give rise to incoherent propositions then the propositions, if not the perceptions, must be rejected as false.

[1] It should be noted that it may be possible to make P3 coherent by asserting a rather stronger concept of personal identity than Buddhists – at least in their orthodox moods – are willing to do. Thus if, for example, the theory states that the reborn individual has the possibility of memory of previous lives, then we do have at least one criterion of personal identity and P3 begins to make sense. It would probably still have to be rejected on the ground of implausibility, but no longer on the ground of incoherence. This move – of asserting a strong sense of personal continuity and identity through many lives – is available to Hindu theoreticians, and is also often made by Buddhists, though for the latter it can only effectively be made at the expense of the *anātman* doctrine.

One more argument may be noted: it is suggested by many contemporary Buddhist (and Hindu) apologists that in fact there are many cases where continuity of memory – one of our important defining characteristics of personal identity – does survive death, and the individual concerned can remember his former life. A casual reader in the annals of the Society for Psychical Research will soon see that there are indeed many more or less well documented cases of such memory. There is no space in this paper to treat this issue in detail,[1] and I shall simply note two points: first, the number of well-documented cases of this kind of thing is very small indeed, and may be reducible to zero when due allowance for gullibility and wishful thinking has been made. Secondly, there are a number of other hypotheses – for example telepathy, neo-Jungian theories of a collective unconscious whereby the memories of the race are available to any individual, and so on – which can be used to explain the cases that may survive critical examination, and which have rather fewer conceptual problems associated with them than does karmic theory in either its Hindu or Buddhist forms.

We may conclude that P3, and its variant P3′, while not actually self-contradictory, are to a greater or lesser extent incoherent, depending on one's definition of personal identity and the prominence given to other significant Buddhist doctrines; that Buddhists themselves have had severe problems in formulating and defending it; that none of the standard Buddhist arguments for the truth of this proposition deal with its real problems; and that the falsity of P3 and P3′ means that the conceptual system of which it is a part – Buddhist karmic theory – is drastically weakened.

Our next derived proposition, P4, is to a large extent parasitic upon P3, the falsity of which has already been demonstrated. If P3 is false then it must also be false to say that the parameters of possibility for any given individual are dependent upon the actions he performed in a previous life. It is important, nevertheless, to note several things about P4, if only to correct some frequently raised objections to Buddhist karmic theory which are not well grounded. It is important to be aware that Buddhist karmic theory is not deterministic in the strong sense that everything one does is strictly governed by everything one previously did. It is only the parameters within which action is possible that are determined by karmic effect in Buddhism. Things like personal appearance, physical defects, mental capacity, place of birth, social class, moral character of one's parents – all these are determined by karmic effect. But within these parameters it is still possible to act well or badly, to make the best possible use of what has been determined for one

[1] John Hick has treated some of the issues in *Death and Eternal Life* (London: Collins, 1976) and see also the many works of Ian Stevenson, e.g. 'Reincarnation: Field Studies and Theoretical Issues' in *Handbook of Parapsychology*, ed. Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977), pp. 631–63.

or to make things still worse by bowing to one's limitations. So Buddhist karmic theory is certainly not a strict determinism, and is thus not open to many of the philosophical objections which can be levelled against determinism. P4 is false in so far as it is dependent upon P3, but it is possible to accept the first part of it which describes the determining of an individual's parameters of possibility at conception, as true, confirmed rather than falsified by well-established data gained from other sources (i.e. scientific investigations into the functions of DNA), and as an adequate and powerful description of the dynamic tension between freedom and necessity observable in human existence. But it must be stressed once again that the reason suggested by Buddhist karmic theory for this dynamic tension is false.

Our next proposition, P5, states that there is no undeserved suffering. If we apply our first question to this, it seems clear that the proposition is not logically contradictory or incoherent. It is, for example, possible to hold it independently of P3/P3′ (though Buddhists do not in fact do so), and there seem to be no other reasons for judging it incoherent.

In order to apply our second question to P5 – that of whether we have well-established data from other sources which might confirm or falsify the proposition in question – we need to clarify the meaning of 'undeserved suffering'. If we mean by 'deserved suffering' any suffering which is directly and causally linked to some previous action of the sufferer (which is what Buddhists mean by it), then we do have well-established data from other sources which at least makes the truth of this proposition rather unlikely. It is a matter of observable fact that newly born or very young children sometimes undergo intense suffering; in such cases it is difficult to see how there can be a direct causal link between the action of the child and his suffering, especially when the suffering is caused by natural disaster or human cruelty, both outside the knowledge and control of a young baby. So in the sense of 'deserved' mentioned previously, the intense sufferings of a young child cannot be deserved – unless, of course, they are the result, as the Buddhist would say, of things done in a previous life. And this brings us back to P3/P3′ which we have already seen to be false.

There are other senses in which 'deserved suffering' could be understood; but as none of them are relevant to the Buddhist view we shall not discuss them here. We may conclude that unless P5 is combined with P3/P3′ it is false because contradicted by observable data; and if P5 is made dependent upon P3/P3′ it is false because based upon a false proposition. We may also note in passing, putting aside our philosophical guise for a moment, that to most Western eyes, and certainly to Christians, P5 is morally reprehensible, even inhuman. But this is a different argument.

We must now turn to the third and final function of Buddhist karmic theory which was distinguished at the beginning of this paper, that of acting as a

mechanism for social control and a rationale for soteriological practice. There are many truth-claims inherent in this function of karmic theory, from among which we shall consider the following two:

P6: A morally qualified volitional act always has a morally equivalent effect upon its agent.

P7: The effect of morally qualified volitional actions directed at other sentient beings is partially dependent upon the status of the recipient of the act.

Once again, to be treated fully each of these propositions should be given a full and detailed analysis for which there is no space here. All that can be done is to indicate the main problem areas. To begin, we should note that there is a prima facie contradiction between P6 and P7. The first states that all morally qualified volitional actions necessarily have a morally equivalent effect upon their agent, and the second that the karmic effect of any such action is at least partially dependent upon factors outside the control, and often the knowledge, of the agent, and therefore independent of his actions. Both propositions would be assented to by thinking Buddhists, and most would not see a contradiction between the two. This is because part of what it is to be a 'morally qualified volitional action directed at another sentient being' consists in the status of the sentient being who is the object of the action. Put differently, karmic effect is dependent in such cases not only upon the agent's intentions and actions, but also upon the recipient's status and character.[1] We need to unpack a little more fully what is meant by 'morally qualified volitional action' in Buddhism: this phrase indicates three of the variables which govern the karmic effect of any given action. First, in order to generate karmic effect a given action must be morally qualified, which means either good or bad. In Buddhist karmic theory there is a class of actions (the processes of the autonomic nervous system and so forth) regarded as morally indeterminate, the these have no karmic effect other than their immediate causal effect upon subsequent physical sensations, postures and so forth. To be morally qualified, then, means to be either prescribed or prohibited by the Buddhist ethical code. Secondly, volition is (for most Buddhist schools) a necessary part of any action which bears karmic fruit. If I step on a bug deliberately the action will bear karmic fruit; if accidentally, it will not. Thirdly, moral qualification and volition must be accompanied by action if karmic effect is to pertain. I might lay plans to murder my wife, purchase arsenic from the drugstore and put it in her coffee, only to discover that I bought a bad batch of arsenic and my wife suffers no ill effects. In such a case the karmic effect that results will be different from that which would have resulted if the arsenic had been effective and my wife had died (though there is equivocation about this in some schools).

[1] This is stated explicitly infrequently in Buddhist texts, but cf. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* ad. 4.4.

The fourth and final variable which governs the karmic fruit of a given action is indicated by P7, and has already been mentioned: the status and character of the recipient of a certain class of morally qualified volitional actions is relevant: suppose I give food to a wandering monk one day and then to a disreputable beggar the next. Assuming that the other variables are equal I will amass more merit by my gift to the monk than by my gift to the beggar because the monk is a worthy recipient of my gift and the beggar is not.

It seems clear, then, that as all these variables have to be taken into account it is going to be very difficult in any given instance to calculate the karmic effect of any particular action; no one – except of course a Buddha – is likely to have enough data at his disposal to make the necessary calculations. This should be further warning that Buddhist karmic theory is no open-and-shut determinism wherein it is possible to calculate with precision the karmic accounts, as it were, of any given individual. Things are much more complex than that, and Buddhist theoreticians themselves tend to retreat into talk of the mystery of karmic effect when pressed for detail.

Having attempted some preliminary clarification of the key terms in P6 and P7 we should now turn to an analysis of their truth-value by applying our four questions. First there is the issue of consistency and coherence: it seems clear that these propositions, taken separately or together, do not enshrine a contradiction, once we are clear about what is meant in Buddhism by 'morally qualified volitional action'. They are not, therefore, to be rejected on those grounds alone.

Our second question was whether or not there exists any well-established data available to us from other sources which might confirm or falsify the propositions in question. At first sight it seems that on the grounds of common sense and observation alone P6 must be false: surely we know very well that we frequently perform morally qualified volitional acts which do not seem to have any quantifiable effect upon us. But, given the complexity and in most cases unknowability of the variables concerned in determining karmic effect, this is not a decisive argument. It is easy for the Buddhist to reply that it simply seems as though a given morally qualified volitional action is without effect, but that if one had access to the whole picture one would see that such is not the case. This move is open to the Buddhist even without retreating to P3/P3′, which we have already seen to be false. A single life is more than long enough for us to forget many relevant factors which might help us to determine, in karmic terms, the causes of apparently fortuitous suffering or good fortune. In practice, though, and certainly in extreme cases, the Buddhist does tend to retreat to P3; one feels, for example, that this is what the Buddhist karmic theoretician would do upon reading the Book of Job. The point remains, though, that we cannot reject either P6 or P7 on these grounds alone.

Our third question was whether or not the proposition in question

provided an adequate and powerful explanation of the data it was constructed to explain. The problem in applying this question to P6 and P7 is that these are essentially propositions designed to exhort people to do things – like give to monks and refrain from killing sentient beings – and only secondarily explanatory statements. It could be claimed that these propositions explain why the Buddhist soteriological path works: that is, why, if you give to monks you amass enough merit to eventually get reborn as a monk yourself, and why it is that when that stage is reached, if you keep all the precepts of the *vinaya* code and meditate diligently you will ultimately attain nirvāṇa. But this is an explanation which assumes what it is trying to explain: it assumes that the Buddhist path does bring you to nirvāṇa, and then provides a rationale for that assumption. It seems, then, that P6 and P7 do not function as adequate and powerful explanations because they were not originally designed as explanations, and when one attempts to assess them as such it becomes necessary to deal with such questions as the efficacy of Buddhist soteriological practice, the problem of whether the Buddhist path does in fact get you to nirvāṇa and the associated issues of whether nirvāṇa is a desirable place to get to and what Buddhist soteriological method would look like without karmic theory. All these issues are unfortunately far beyond the scope of this paper.

Our fourth question was that of whether there are phenomena within the relevance-range of the proposition in question which cannot be effectively handled by it. We have already noted that it certainly seems as if there are: those morally qualified volitional actions which, as far as we can tell, produce no karmic effect. But we have also seen that the Buddhist can preserve the possible truth of P6 and P7 by making them compatible with any possible state of affairs; all apparent exceptions can then be explained away as manifestations of the mystery and complexity of the mechanism by which karma is put into effect. In extreme cases, as for example in the instance of Job's rather distressing experiences, this begins to sound somewhat implausible. We may conclude, rather indecisively, that P6 and P7 cannot be shown to be false, but this is so only because they are sufficiently vague to be compatible with any state of affairs whatever, and thus devoid of explanatory power.[1] Moreover, inasmuch as Buddhists base their arguments for P6 on P3 or P3′ – which they very frequently do – P6 (and by extension P7) is also false.

We have now concluded our examination of some of the significant truth-claims associated with the three major functions of karmic theory in Buddhism. It must be stressed once again that the discussion in this paper has not been intended to provide anything approaching a complete account of the functions of, or truth-claims involved in, Buddhist karmic theory. A

[1] Where is the Antony Flew among Buddhist philosophers to demand that karmic theory be in principle falsifiable?

great deal more could be said. Nevertheless, some of the major problems have been pointed out, and if the arguments offered here are good then the conclusion is clear: the empirical falsification of P1 and P2, the partial incoherence of P3 and its variant P3′, the falsity of P4 in so far as it depends on P3/P3′, the empirical falsification and moral repugnance of P5, the vacuousness of P6 and P7 – all these mean that Buddhist karmic theory as expounded in the major theoretical works devoted to it must be false. This is not to say that no version of Buddhist karmic theory can be true; new attempts to construct and expound such a theory are to be looked for and welcomed, but anyone who wishes to assert the truth of normative Buddhist karmic theory has to at least deal with these objections. Finally, we should note that the problematic nature of Buddhist karmic theory as it presently stands should pose many urgent questions for Buddhists, and raises the further fascinating question of what Buddhism without karmic theory might look like.

INHERITED RESPONSIBILITY, KARMA AND ORIGINAL SIN*

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My aim in this paper is to show how it is possible that we can: (i) inherit responsibility for what our cultural ancestors have done; (ii) pass on karma to others who will live in the future; and (iii) be born in a state of original sin. My method will be to sketch how these three doctrines can be explained using the reincarnation thesis which I reject, and then to offer a speculation in which X's being a reincarnation of person Y is replaced by X's being partly constituted by participation in a collective entity which contains Y as an earlier stage. The result will then provide speculative reconstructions of the three doctrines.

1. THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHICAL SPECULATION

To speculate is to present a hypothesis without asserting it to be true, but merely to be something which 'for all we know' might be true. A speculation should, however, be defended against objections, including Ockhamist ones, which if successful would provide good grounds for believing the speculation false.

Philosophical speculation may be used, as in this paper, to answer 'How is it possible?' questions, such as the Kantian 'How is a priori knowledge of synthetic truths possible?' or, in this paper, 'How is original sin possible?' Asking such a question is not an expression of curiosity. Rather, the questioner implies a defeasible presumption against the occurrence of the item in question (eg, original sin). Querying its 'possibility' suggests that the occurrence of the item in question fails to cohere with accepted accounts of the nature of things.

One response to 'How is it possible?' questions is that the item in question indeed fails to cohere with accepted accounts of the nature of things, and so much the worse for the accepted accounts. If like Tertullian and Kierkegaard you have a penchant for paradox, then you could express this by saying that the item in question is not possible but still happens. But in contemporary philosophical English we would just say that it was supernatural. This paper is, however, written within the scope of Antisupernaturalism (which is implied by, but does not imply, Naturalism). More specifically, I shall not dismiss the defeasible presumption implied by a 'How is it possible?' question. Instead I aim to defeat the presumption by offering philosophical speculations which show how the item in question is 'possible', that is, coherent with accepted accounts of the nature of things.

2. The reincarnation account of inherited responsibility, karma, and original sin.

My philosophical speculation involves a replacement for reincarnation. But why not rely on reincarnation itself? As a preliminary, then, I shall discuss whether inherited responsibility, karma and original sin can be defended using the hypothesis that we have many lives which are but stages of the one individual.

People have, I say, obligations to the descendants of those whom their ancestors wronged. Readers will think of their own examples, but I shall consider the obligation which those of us of European descent have to those of us who are Aborigines.[1] I often hear it said that these obligations are precisely the same as to any other disadvantaged group. Yet intuitively there seems to be a difference: retributive justice, not merely distributive justice needs to be satisfied with respect to the Aborigines. But how can this be? Why should I be responsible for what others have done?

Sometimes it is said that people share responsibility for those wrongs which they knowingly benefit from. Perhaps that is so, but it does not explain my inherited responsibility towards the

Aborigines. For a case can be made for saying that their dispossession and exploitation has been, on balance, of harm to Australians of European origin. The strength or weakness of this case seems quite irrelevant to my current responsibility.

Reflection on our dependence on society with its history enables us to reformulate the suggestion that we are responsible for the wrongs we have benefited from. Perhaps the benefit is *existential* in that the sort of person I am would not have come about had history differed significantly. So I benefit from the exploitation of others not by living the so-called good life, but by existing at all as the sort of person I am.[2] That, does not, however, explain my share of responsibility towards the descendants of those whom my ancestors wronged. For they too have derived the benefit of existence from the historical context of their lives. But for their ancestors' dispossession and exploitation by the British colonialists, the Aborigines would not exist as the sort of persons they are. For they, partly constituted as they are by their matrix of social relations, could no more have been brought up in a pre-colonisation Aboriginal society than I could have.

Something more radical is required, I suggest, if we are to capture the intuition that we share responsibility for what our ancestors have done. There must be some analogy between it and the responsibility of an elderly person for some crime committed in youth. To be sure the person will have changed, and might well have truly repented. But there is still a responsibility. Let us suppose, for instance, that a famous and wealthy doctor who spends time and money looking after street kids had, thirty years previously, cheated relatives out of all they owned. The doctor is a changed person. Nor does it matter if the cheated relatives are less badly off than the street kids. We judge that restitution should be made. Sharing in the crimes of our ancestors must be like that if it is to be a matter of retributive justice rather than a rhetorical trick intended to ensure distributive justice.

There is, then, a genuine problem in explaining how it is possible that some of us should be responsible for those whom our ancestors

wronged. The obvious solution to this problem is an appeal to reincarnation. If we are indeed born repeatedly, then my responsibility for what was done in previous generations might be quite literally my responsibility for what I have done. But what if we discovered that the cultural (and genetic) descendants of the ones who were wronged were the reincarnations of those who did the wrong, and vice versa? My intuition, for what it is worth, is that this might lessen but would not entirely remove responsibility for what our ancestors did. If I am right, then reincarnation, even if otherwise acceptable, does not underpin our intuitions about inherited responsibility.

I now turn to karma. This is, I submit, to be defined contextually in terms of the Law of Karma. In any case it is the latter with which I am concerned. The Law of Karma, in the form I find most plausible, states that 'as you sow, thus you shall reap': wrong attitudes and intentions result in sorrow and/or vice; right attitudes and intentions result in joy and/or virtue, where virtue is something positive, not the mere absence of vice. This is to be thought of both as a law of moral psychology and as a principle of retributive justice. I go on to suggest that we can choose between sorrow and vice and choose between joy and virtue. By accepting suffering we ward off the vice which would otherwise result from the law, and so exhibit the intentions and develop the attitudes which result in joy and/or virtue. By choosing virtue rather than joy when there is a choice we likewise develop the attitudes which in result in more joy and/or virtue.

If the Law of Karma was merely the statement of a tendency it would be an unproblematic rough generalisation in moral psychology. But it appeals largely as a principle of retributive justice. It is, however, contrary to experience that good and bad attitudes or intentions result in *commensurate* joy (or virtue) and suffering (or vice) in a given lifetime. The Law of Karma is therefore associated with the doctrine of reincarnation: eventually the attitudes and intentions will bear the appropriate fruit.

I now turn to what is perhaps the most difficult of the three doctrines, namely original sin. This doctrine is that we are in some sense guilty because of what was done by our ancestors in the past. And we have inherited the tendency to do more wrong as a result of this past wrong-doing. Even if the notion of sin is separated from moral guilt, and defined as not being in the proper relation with God, it is both strange and unfair, so it seems, that we have inherited these faulty relations with God, which threaten to prevent us ever coming to enjoy the infinitely great good of the beatific vision.

Although the doctrine of original sin is part of a tradition which has often been hostile to reincarnation, it is possible to give an account of it in terms of reincarnation. And, to dramatise this account, let us take the doctrine in its most traditional form, and suppose—evolution not being gradual—that we are all descended from two first human beings, Eve and Adam. The reincarnation account would be that we are all reincarnations of one or other of our first parents. Such reincarnation would not be a matter of strict identity, for fission would have occurred with billions of us being reincarnations of just two people. But if all that is involved in our survival from one day to the next is just the non-accidental non-artificial ensurance of psychological continuity, then an account of reincarnation is simpler if we permit fission, than if we exclude it. It is then a purely verbal dispute whether survival in another Earthly life counts as reincarnation even if fission into several new lives occurs. I stipulate that it does.

Probably we do not have firm intuitions concerning responsibility where there has been fission into several individuals. Nonetheless it is not implausible that a deliberate turning away from God by our first parents, of whom we are reincarnations, would have much the same consequences as a deliberate turning away from God by ourselves in the lives we now live, and that, but for outside intervention, this could, in either case, well lead to the loss of the beatific vision. Furthermore, those who, partly as a

result of divine intervention, die in a state of friendship with God might well be spared the quasi-extinction of fission, and, presumably, any further reincarnations. Hence all of us are reincarnations of those who die without being friends with God, which is why we come into the world having sinned and with a tendency towards further sin.

3. Replacing reincarnation by participation

Thus far I have been considering the speculation that reincarnation accounts for inherited responsibility and original sin, as well as karma. I have already presented one difficulty with the reincarnation account of inherited responsibility. I shall now present an argument against reliance on reincarnation when accounting for either inherited responsibility or for original sin. This argument starts with a dilemma concerning the conditions for survival required for reincarnation. If a person at one time and a person at another have to be *strictly identical* for survival, as on the Simple View,[3] then, by the transitivity and symmetry of identity, there can be no fission. Immediately that refutes the account of original sin which I have given. But it also results in further difficulties with the account I gave of inherited responsibility. For often the descendants of those who wronged some group vastly outnumber those who did the wrong. So, without fission, only a small percentage could be responsible. On the other hand, if we reject the requirement of strict identity we must, like Theravada Buddhists and like Hume, rely heavily on *psychological continuity*. For in the case of reincarnation, spatial continuity is empirically defeated.

The next step in the argument is to note that if there is reincarnation with psychological continuity then there should be methods of discovering our previous lives, for they should leave traces. Such methods have been devised, notably hypnotic regression. We ought, however, to reject the evidence from that

source, not as fraudulent, but as indicative of something other than reincarnation. For it is common enough to find people under hypnosis re-living several very different lives which overlapped.[4]

Now I have accepted fission as compatible with psychological continuity, but fusing with another life would totally disrupt that continuity. The situation, then, is that the hypothesis of reincarnation, if it relies on psychological continuity, results in the prediction that such techniques as hypnotic regression should reveal evidence of former lives. That prediction initially seemed to be correct, but has been shown incorrect, because of the multiplicity of former lives living at the one time. And false predictions are, to say the least, an embarrassment for a theory.

To be sure, no one should have predicted with certainty that if reincarnation occurs there should be traces accessible under hypnosis, so the failure of this prediction is by no means a conclusive argument. This might not matter except that reincarnation is already theoretically suspect for the obvious reason that no feasible mechanism ensures psychological continuity. Indeed in the absence of empirical evidence for psychological continuity between lives, the more overtly metaphysical speculation of a non-physical soul as a principle of mental unity might have something to commend it, leading to a very traditional view of reincarnation. But that is not compatible with fission.

In any case, even if, as I doubt, reincarnation with fission is an acceptable speculation, it is surely of interest to defend a different speculation which achieves much the same theoretical results. And it is to this that I now turn.

The participation replacement for reincarnation requires a moderate version of the thesis of the social construction of the self. Nine parts of self is other. That I say nine parts not ten parts marks me out as a moderate in this regard. The point being made is that my conception of myself—what I think of a distinctively me—as well as much of what gives me value as an individual, depends on my standing or having stood in various relations with others,

especially those involved in my upbringing. A necessary condition (in any normal circumstances) for coming to be the sort of person that I am, with my way of thinking of myself, is that I was brought up as I was, and subsequently entered into the sorts of social relations I have. This is a moderate thesis because it is quite compatible with any or all of the following claims: that there is a metaphysical self possessing which ensures personal identity; that my genetic endowment is partly constitutive of what I am; that to some extent I have chosen what to be; and that the relations which constitute me include those with God as well as those with my fellow human beings.

To this moderate version of the social construction of self I add a much less moderate hypothesis, namely that the societies which partly constitute us are what I call *moral persons*. What I mean is that a society can act and can have responsibility for its actions. In this way, the familiar causal influences of one generation on the next may properly be redescribed as the moral history of a society which, in its members at one time, does right or wrong and so, in its members at another time, bears the consequences both morally and psychologically. Instead of X being a reincarnation of Y, Z etc, X is partly constituted by a society which is in turn constituted by Y, Z etc.

This participation speculation will enable us to give accounts of inherited responsibility, karma and original sin, depending on the particular society we are considering to be a moral person. The obvious difficulty, however, is in defending the claim that societies are moral persons. I am not here speculating that societies have self-conscious minds, still less that they have a will of their own.[5] I do, however, have to ascribe some mental states to societies (eg intentions) if they are to be said to *act* and so be moral persons. Otherwise, they would only be *as if* responsible for what they *as if* did. The key, I take it, to an antisupernaturalist account of the mental states societies is Functionalism.[6] This is the theory that mental states may be accurately characterised by the causal/dispositional

relations (i) between them and other mental states, (ii) between the whole system of mental states and stimuli, and (iii) between the whole system of mental states and behaviour. For instance, while a behaviourist might have characterised fear as the disposition to flee, a functionalist would acknowledge that fear can only be characterised by also considering its connections with cognitive states. Thus functionalists do not attempt to characterise mental states in isolation, their approach is holistic.

On the assumption of Functionalism, any state with the appropriate causal/dispositional relations, and appropriately related to that which is outside the system should be considered a mind, the states should be considered mental states, and the effects of the system on that which is outside it should be considered behaviour. It follows that person-like beings do not have to be of flesh and blood. Appropriately programmed, appropriately complex computers count as persons provided they have appropriate connections between their states and their environment. Likewise there could be exotic extraterrestrial persons based on systems which we would not recognise as living organisms, say patterns in plasma currents near a black hole.

I have used the word 'appropriate' a great deal when stating the functionalist characterisation of persons. The guide, I take it, to appropriateness, is that there is a structural similarity between the system and the mental states of an individual human being. By a *structural* similarity I mean that a description of the two systems would be similar if we ignored the intrinsic properties of the components and concentrated instead on the patterns of causal/dispositional relations. This might not be as precise as we would like, but it will do for the purposes of this discussion.

I shall now consider two objections to the account I have given. One is that a society does not exhibit sufficient structural similarity to an individual human being for it to be reasonable to ascribe responsibilities to it. My reply to that objection is that we have no way of knowing what degree of similarity is required. It is this

ignorance which prevents my account being anything more than a philosophical speculation.

The second objection is that in simple cases we know perfectly well how to paraphrase claims about the responsibilities of a society without recourse to any account of them as moral persons. Thus the Philosophy Department is responsible for its teaching and research, but that just amounts to the responsibilities of the individual members. If this holds in simple cases, surely, the objection goes, we should treat the responsibilities of more complex societies in the same way, namely as totally reducible to the responsibilities of individuals.

There are two ways of replying to this objection. The first is to note that we could say much the same about the responsibility of individual human beings. Our actions are just the result of patterns of neuronal activity, and for suitably simple neural networks (eg of giant leeches) we have no need to talk of responsibility, so why talk of responsibility when it comes to the hugely complex ones which make us up? Yet we do. Whatever we say for the case of individual human beings we might also say for societies.

The second way of replying to the objection is to note that there is a relevant difference between the responsibilities of simpler and more complicated societies. In simple cases the members of the society are only responsible for righting wrongs for which they are individually to blame, whereas in more complicated cases the members can be responsible for what the society has done even though they are not individually to blame. For example, a society could be at fault for fostering the sciences, but neglecting the humanities, or vice versa. Yet no one individual need have done anything wrong. It just happened that all patrons of learning decided to fund the sciences. (Here I am considering a society in which the central government considers the funding of cultural activities to be none of its business, but there is no shortage of wealthy patrons.) In that case, I submit, no one has done anything wrong but the people comprising that society have become

collectively responsible to right the wrong situation brought about by society as a whole. Examples such as these cast doubt on the proposed reduction of the responsibility of a society to that of its individuals.

4. The participation account of inherited responsibility, karma and original sin.

One speculation, then, about our responsibility to the descendants of those whom our ancestors dispossessed and exploited is to take both groups as the present stages of moral persons (namely societies) of which the earlier stage of one harmed the earlier stage of the other.

From what I have said about inherited responsibility, the outline of my speculations about karma and original sin will be apparent. It is not that I, an individual human being, shall be reincarnated, but rather that a moral person of which I am now one of the parts has other parts in the future. It is this moral person which reaps as it sows. And I should not complain if the result is suffering for me, for only by being part of that moral person can I be the sort of person who I am.

For this account to be true, a rather simple law, the Law of Karma, must emerge from the complex network of social relations between individuals. How can something so disorganised as a group of interacting persons result in a law of such stark simplicity? Surely, we think, the description of groups must be more complicated than that. Here I appeal to something which Polkinghorne has emphasised, namely the surprising way in which order can appear in complex systems.[7] For example, when a liquid is heated and convection occurs, billions of molecules 'organise themselves' so as to result in hexagonal columns of rising and falling liquid. Or again, the unintelligent and apparently random activities of a million termites result in the building of a massive and orderly nest. Likewise, I submit, simple laws governing societies can

emerge in spite of their analytic complexity. These laws, being derived rather than fundamental, will not be without exception. Nonetheless they will hold in the vast majority of cases in a fairly accurate way. One such might well be the Law of Karma. The mechanism by which it operates is a law of moral psychology holding within the individual's lifetime to some extent, but also of the moral person formed by the ordinary social interactions between those whom we may call karmic heirs and karmic ancestors.

I have already offered reconstructions of inherited responsibility and of the Law of Karma. My reconstruction of the doctrine of original sin is obtained by combining the two, and considering a moral person consisting of humanity as a whole. Because of the wrong attitudes and intentions of individual men and women, humanity as a whole, and not just various societies, may be said to have wrong attitudes and intentions, whence by the Law of Karma it is both inevitable and just that humanity as a whole suffers sorrow and/or vice, which it does by the sorrow or vice which individuals freely choose between. In this way we inherit a tendency towards vice which we can only avoid by accepting suffering, and it is right and proper that we do so. Humanity has sinned so humanity must suffer. Moreover, we should not complain as individuals, for our existence as the sort of beings whom we are depends on our participation in humanity.

ENDNOTES

1 By descendants I always mean the cultural descendants. Likewise for ancestors.

2 Compare Robert Adams 'Existence, Self-interest, and the Problem of Evil', *Noûs*, 13, 1979 pp. 53-65.

3 For expositions of the Simple View, see Roderick Chisholm, *Person and Object*, (Allen and Unwin, 1976), Ch. 3; Robert Coburn, 'Personal Identity Revisited', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 1985 (vol. 15), pp. 379–404; and Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne, *Personal Identity*, Blackwell, 1984, pp. 22–34 and pp. 122–129

4 My evidence for this comes from practising hypnotherapists Denis Burke and Jill Sykes. Not only have they encountered the phenomenon, they consider it common knowledge among hypnotherapists.

5 That further speculation could provide us with an antisupernatural angelology and demonology. It could also lead to an account in which original sin is participation in Satan, to be replaced by participation in Christ.

6 Compare William P. Alston, 'Functionalism and Theological Language' *American Philosophical Quarterly,* 1985 (vol 22) pp. 221–9 who provides an application of Functionalism to Theology.

7 John Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence,* London: SPCK, 1989.

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IMPERATIVES AND RELIGION IN INDIA

Shlomo Biderman

An ancient Indian parable tells of a traveller who lost his way in a dense forest. Trying to find his way out he encountered a wild elephant which charged at him, trunk upraised. Terrified, the traveller looked for refuge. As the parable concludes, he finds himself hanging on a clump of reeds growing from the wall of an old well, while two mice are busily gnawing the roots of the reeds. Waiting patiently at the bottom of the well were many snakes. Among them, a hugh python, its mouth wide open, ready to catch the miserable traveller when the mice had finished their meal. [1]

The purport of this story is to teach the highest value of Indian religion. The traveller is the human soul and his journey through the forest is *saṃsāra* - the endless and painful chain of suffering and misery which can not be terminated as long as man chooses to see himself as part of phenomenal existence. The only way to stop this suffering is by detaching oneself from this mode of phenomenal existence and by acquiring a right philosophical knowledge about the world. When these are finally achieved, man attains the long-desired state of release (*mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*).

There is no doubt that the notion of release - that is to say, the assumptions concerning the existence of *nirvāṇa* and the possibility of attaining it - is the most fundamental notion of the majority of the philosophical and religious schools of India. However, among the six main philosophical schools that form what is commonly defined as 'Hindu philosophy', Jaimini, the founder of the Mimamsa school, was the only thinker in whose writings *nirvāṇa* is not even mentioned. Indeed, one searches Jaimini's writings in vain for any attempt at preaching an ultimate release from everyday existence. Returning to the parable quoted above, it thus seems to me that it is not coincidental that the only detail kept in Indian tradition about the life of Jaimini is his unfortunate death, as a result of a savage attack by a wild elephant. Within a cultural tradition that regarded *nirvāṇa* to be the highest value for man, the Mimamsa school is therefore quite exceptional. It is for this reason that it has aroused little interest among scholars and researchers of Indian philosophy and religion. A substantial number of books and articles devoted to Hinduism as a religion and a way of life do not even mention the Mīmāmṣā. And among historical studies of Indian Philosophy there are instances of outright scorn and contempt directed towards it. [2]

My firm conviction is that such attitude towards the Mīmāṃsā school cannot be justified. Moreover, I believe that one can find in the religious position of ancient Mīmāṃsā some promising possibilities for a new appreciation of the religious phenomenon as well as some sophisticated arguments which are relevant to current studies in the philosophy of religion. Within the framework of the present paper I will deal primarily with one aspect of ancient Mīmāṃsā - its standpoint concerning the status of religious language. The position of the Mīmāṃsā on this issue may be familiar to anyone who is acquainted with certain contemporary philosophies of religion. However, my method in the present paper will not be explicitly comparative. Rather, I will confine myself to the examination of the primary sources of ancient Mīmāṃsā, and even when using some Western terms, I will try my best not to distort or misinterpret the ideas conveyed in these ancient Indian

texts.

It seems appropriate to begin with a short historical description of the development of the Mīmāmsā school. Hindu philosophy in India evolved in six major forms. They are known as *darśanas*, or the six classical schools of Hinduism. The Mīmāṃsā school is considered to be one of the most ancient of these schools and it is notimplausible to suggest that it is perhaps the most ancient of all the *darśanas*. The oldest text of the Mīmāṃsā known to us today is the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* which, according to Indian tradition, was written by the somewhat mysterious Jaimini. It was, probably, composed in the third or second centuries B. C. However, there is room to suppose that the actual beginnings of the Mīmāṃsā school can be dated even earlier; there exists sufficient evidence of the activity of several Mīmāṃsā thinkers, before Jaimini, whose writings have not survived. The *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* is, in all probability, a systematic summary of some religious conceptions that existed in India up to the time of Jaimini. Several commentaries were written on the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, and the most important one known to us today is that of Śabara. According to most scholars this commentary was written in the first or second centuries A. D., that is, about five hundred years after Jaimini's lifetime. [3]

The term 'Mīmāṃsā' can be found in some ancient Indian texts prior to Jaimini. It is derived from the Sanskrit root '*man*' meaning, 'to know', and can be translated as 'desire for knowledge', or, less literally, as 'inquiry'. The subject of that inquiry are the Vedas - the most ancient part of Indian *śruti*. The *śruti* - 'heard' scriptures - are considered to be infallible and to possess eternal, absolute authority. *Śruti*, as its meaning testifies, originated in the oral tradition. Its most ancient and sacred parts are the four Vedas, which are supposed to have originated around 1000 B.C. One of the Vedas is made up primarily of hymns in praise of the gods; a second, which contains the same hymns, records how they should be chanted; a third is composed of prayers to accompany the rituals of sacrifice; and a fourth has spells and magic incantations. The religion of the Vedas is predominantly polytheistic, but some of its later hymns imply or state other conceptions which tend to be more monotheistic and even monistic. To each of the Vedas there are attached other writings, also classified as *śruti*. One such *śruti*, the Brāhmaṇas, plays a major role in the Mīmāṃsā religion. The aim of the Brāhmaṇas is to explain the Vedic hymns and rituals, stating many detailed rules and regulations concerning the performance of the religious practices. Whenever the Mīmāṃsā refers to the Veda, it also includes the Brāhmaṇas within this term. In the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, Jaimini's purpose was to offer a systematic explanation of the Vedic ritualistic religion. It is, in fact, the largest work in all the *sūtra*-literature in India and it consists of about 2,700 *sūtras*.

The main purpose of the Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra is presented in the opening *sūtra*. A literal translation of it runs as follows: "Now, therefore, an inquiry into duty". [4] The key-notion of this verse is of course the term 'duty', which is the translation of the Sanskrit term '*dharma*'. *Dharma* was widely used by different schools of Indian philosophy and, consequently, it has more than one meaning. As such, one should be aware not to confuse the meaning

of *dharma* in other schools with its meaning in the Mīmāṃsā system. I have chosen to translate *'dharma'* (within the framework of the Mīmāṃsā) as 'duty', and my reasons will, I hope, become clear as I proceed.

The subject-matter of the Mīmāṃsā is thus the examination of 'duty'. Even at first glance this statement invites several questions: What is the nature of this duty? How is it expressed? By whom is it commanded? The second *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* defines the nature of duty unequivocally. Duty consists of a total obedience to all the injunctions that can be found in the Vedas.[5] Expressed generally, duty is presented as a set of laws, injunctions and regulations, to which the believer must strictly adhere, both in the positive sense of 'do' and in the negative sense of 'do not.' Thus, the religious verses that appear in the Vedas have a single and unified purpose: to instruct man in the permitted paths of action, and to block off those paths that are forbidden him. It follows that *dharma* or duty is not dependent either on some abstract articles of faith or on the existence of some mental state. In other words, religion obliges the believer only as a set of injunctions, that is, only insofar as religion impinges on his actions. Religion is not therefore intended to provide man with historical, cosmological, psychological or moral precepts; it certainly does not claim to preach a spiritual method of release by which man can attain the absolute Being. The sole legitimate aim of religion is to oblige man to perform certain activities and to refrain from others. If I may rephrase the lase sentence in more familiar philosophical terminology, it is clear that to the Mīmāṃsā religious language is a prescriptive language which consists of imperatives. Any attempt to reduce the religious imperatives to indicatives will be rejected by the Mīmāṃsā as a distortion both of religion and the role and function of religious language. The uniqueness of religious language lies in the fact that it does not describe any particular state of affairs; it does not tell the believer that something is the case, but rather obliges him to act in certain ways so as to make something the case. If we adopt the terminology widely used in contemporary philosophy of religion, we can state that in the debate held between philosophers who claim that religious language should consist of indicatives and have a cognitive meaning, and those who claim that religious expressions are not cognitive, the Mīmāṃsā would have associated itself with the latter position.

The characterization of religious language as a prescriptive language is for the Mīmāṃsā the starting-point for lengthy discussions concerning the nature of religious imperatives and the appropriate way to understand them. As I have already pointed out, a basic distinction drawn by the Mīmāṃsā is between 'positive' imperatives and 'negative' imperatives; that is, between commands that oblige the believer to act in a certain way and those which proscribe the believer from performing certain other actions. Indeed, Jaimini suggests many classifications of various religious imperatives. At this stage, however, it will be enough to mention only one of these classifications. Jaimini argues that in order for a command to be considered religious (and, hence, obligatory), it must contain a *novelty*. The existence of novelty serves as a necessary condition for regarding any command as authoritative and binding. In other words, religious imperatives are not intended to command an action, the performance of which is necessary, nor are they meant to authorize an action which would have been carried out by most

people as a matter of inclination, habit, custom, etc. To give a hypothetical example, if the Mīmāṃsā had come across a command which calls upon man to "enjoy life with a woman you love all the days of your allotted span here under the sun," it would not regard its primary meaning as religious. The enjoyment of life with the beloved woman (whatever the meaning of that may be) is desired by most human beings anyway, and, therefore, does not require a religious imperative to command it. Thus one would expect the Mīmāṃsā to explain the verse quoted above (as it had actually done in similar cases) as having some secondaty, non-literal meaning. Similarly, religious imperatives are not meant to command the performance of impossible actions. Thus, when Śābara, the commentator on the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, encounters the Vedic injunction which forbids the kindling of fire in the sky, he is anxious to emphasize that this Vedic injunction should not be understood as conveying its literal meaning, but rather in terms of its relation to another injunction whose execution is possible.[6]

In spite of these interpretations, Jaimini declares in several places throughout the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* that the meaning of religious language does not differ from that of ordinary, everyday language. He even goes so far as stating explicitly that the two must be regarded as conveying the same meaning, since, if it were not so, religious commands would be incomprehensible and, consequently, useless.[7] However, neither Jaimini nor Śābara remain entirely faithful to this dictum, on occasions finding it necessary to modify and even to neglect it completely. Thus Jaimini offers a tipartite classification of the Vedic sentences, as follows: (i) *vidhi*-sentences which consist of all explicit injunctions and prohibitions that appear in the Vedas; (ii) *artha*-sentences which embrace the indicative sentences in the Vedas, describing primarily the nature and function of the gods; (iii) *mantra*-sentences which are basically spells and chants uttered during the religious rituals and sacrificial ceremonies. As I have already pointed out, the Mīmāṃsā sees the injunctions, i.e., the *vidhi*-sentences, as the sole constituent of religious language. At the same time it takes the Vedas as a whole to be infallible and to possess an absolute authority. Given that the Vedas include many descriptive passages, these two statements appear incompatible. It must, therefore, follow that either religious language is not totally injunctive or that not all that can be found in the Vedas in equally authoritative. Jaimini is well aware of this apparent incompatibility and presents it explicitly as an argument put forward by the Mīmāṃsā's opponents. This argument concludes that since the purpose of the Vedas is to command actions, those parts of it which do not serve that purpose are of no use and so should be regarded as unauthoritative.[8] Śābara goes even further and supplies the opponents with many examples by which they attempt to undermind the injunctive standpoint of the Mīmāṃsā. In one place the Vedas tell about a god who sheds tears. How are we to explain this passage? Should be see it as commanding the believers to shed tears too?[9] In the same vein the opponents ask: How should we understand all the Vedic passages which stand in overt contradiction to our simple, everyday experience? To give but one example: How should we understand the Vedic declaration that during daytime one can see only the smoke of a fire but not the fire itself?[10]

Jaimini presents one general answer to all these questions. According to

him, the indicative sentences in the Vedas must be seen as auxiliaries, put forward to explain and clarify the religious imperatives. Their aim is to praise the religious injunctions, thereby convincing the believer to carry them out correctly.[11] In such cases, therefore, it is necessary to interpret the descriptive passages as conveying some secondary, non-literal meaning.[12] It is in this way that, throughout his commentary, Śābara interprets many Vedic passages. Let me cite but one example in this context - that of the god who sheds tears. Śābara argues that the description of the crying god is really meant to serve as means for understanding the Vedic injunction that prohibits the use of silver in one of the rituals (for at the end of the description it is noted that the tears of the god turned into drops of silver).[13] Indeed, the way from the myth about the crying god to the laconic prohibition against using silver in some ritual is not short, and is achieved by a series of verbal acrobatics which any professional casuist would have been proud of. It is not my intention to follow the line of casuistry. Rather it is to emphasize that, according to the Mīmāṃsā, religious language does not possess any indicative meaning. Thus the Mīmāṃsā will make every attempt - within the bounds of common sense and sometimes beyond - to disconnect any scriptural sentence from its descriptive meaning and interpret it as supplementary clause to the injunctive sentences. Similarily, the Mīmāṃsā attributes only marginal significance to *mantra*-sentences and sees their main purpose as aiding the performer of the ritual to remember what is required of him.[14]

Dharma, then, is expressed by the set of laws and injunctions which are presented to the believer in the Vedic scriptures. Obviously, the infallibility of these scriptures is a necessary condition for accepting the religious imperatives as authoritative and binding. In other words, in order that the religious commands would be regarded as obligatory, the validity of the Vedas should be acknowledged beyond any reasonable doubt. Establishing the authority of the scriptures is therefore the central task of the theologian or the religious philosopher. However, the question of the authority of the scriptural texts has been almost totally neglected in recent discussions in the philosophy of religion. This neglect seems to me very unfortunate. The significance of the scriptures to the religious institution is, I think, no less crucial than the significance of the existence of God. The prevailing opinion often sees scriptural authority as derived from the existence of God, who, in this sense, serves as the validator of scripture. It seems to me, however, that a close scrutiny will reveal that sometimes the existence of God, far from being the source of the scriptures, is actually dependent on a prior acceptance of them as authoritative and infallible. The Mīmāṃsā is, in fact, one example of a religion in which the question of the existence of God is totally dependent on the assumption of the scriptures as absolutely valid (Judaism being, I think, another case).

Accepting the notion of scripture (*śruti*) to be the backbone of religion, Jaimini does not hesitate to draw the extreme conclusion that from the notion of scriptural validity one can posit the *non*-existence of God. First and foremost, the Mīmāṃsā argues that the scriptures - being authoritative, that is, everlasting, unchangeable and infallible - do not stem from any external source, either divine or human.[15] In this context, regarding the scriptures as

being handed down by God would clash with their external nature, thereby weakening their validity. As van Buitenen puts it,

> Revelation is by no means God's word - because, paradoxically, if it were to derive from a divine person, its credibility would be impugned. It is held to be authorless, for if a person, human or divine, has authored it, it would be vulnerable to the defects inherent in such a person. It is axiomatic that revelation is infallible, and this infallibility can be defended only if it is authorless.[16]

The authority of the scriptures is absolute precisely because they were never composed. They cannot, therefore, be subject to falsification. More generally, God understood as the legislator or validator of religious injunctions will make the injunctions appear, not as ends-in-themselves, but rather as a means achieving the will of God. As we shall see, such an assumption would deal a serious blow to the very foundations of the Mīmāṃsā religion, for it would undermine the constitutive status of the religious injunctions. We can premise the Mīmāṃsā religion on the maxim 'In the beginning was the Injunction'. A consistent, even though not necessary, implication of this maxim would be the complete denial of the existence of God. If religion is nothing more than a set of obligations and prohibitions found in the scriptures, and if God has no status within these obligations and prohibitions, it is difficult to imagine just what significance can be attributed to his existence. It is consequently not surprising that the Mīmāṃsā flatly denies God's existence, both as the cause of the world (i.e., its creator and preserver), and as the highest authority before whom man is accountable for his actions. The Mīmāṃsā is, then, an outstanding example of an atheist creed. Indeed, a thousand years after Jaimini's lifetime we hear Kumārila (one of the most important philosophers of the Mīmāṃsā school) complaining that the Mīmāṃsā religion was commonly regarded in India as *lokāyata*, i.e., atheistic, and promising to refute this charge.[17] However, as far as the existence of God is concerned, Kumārila's promise remains unfulfilled; in fact he himself contributes some arguments aimed at rejecting the existence of God while at the same time attempting to refute the charge of atheism by affirming the possibility of release (*mokṣa*). If we bear in mind that the Mīmāṃsā is considered as one of the solid cornerstones of Hindu religious orthodoxy, we will realize that a religious orthodoxy is not necessarily identical with a firm and dogmatic belief in God. On the contrary, the belief in God, with all its intellectual and emotional faces, is considered by the Mīmāṃsā to be a degeneratory element in religion which undermines the constitutive structure of the imperatives. The latter are understood, therefore, as the alpha and omega of religion.

The atheistic conclusion of the Mīmāṃsā may come as a surprise to anyone who restricts himself to a cursory glance through the pages of the Vedas. Such a reader will undoubtedly discover several passages primarily devoted to the description of the power and glory of various gods. Such passages however leave the Mīmāṃsā unperturbed, and this for two reasons. First, because the Vedas present a polytheistic religion that is much more restricted than at first appears. By this I mean that the status of gods is quite limited. They are not regarded as the creators of the set of injunctions, but as subject to it. Second, the Mīmāṃsā claims that whenever in the Vedas we come

across hymns of praise to the might of one god or another, we are not meant to accept them literally, but rather to see them as auxiliaries to the imperatives. Following this approach, Śābara suggests an interesting explanation for the mutual relationship that exists between the religious activity on the one hand and the Vedic gods on the other hand. He compares this relationship to the grammatical relations existing between the designator in a sentence and it designatum.[18] By way of an example he considers the sentence 'The prince's servant should be honoured.' [19] It is clear that the subject of the sentence is the designatum (the servant) and not the designator (the prince). The word 'prince' has a limited role, namely to aid in the identification of the person upon whom honour and respect should be bestowed. Similarily, the Vedic gods are nothing but the designators of the religious activity. Their names are used merely as means for clarifying the exact nature of the injunctions. Thus, Śābara argues, the concept of the gods does not logically precede the concept of religious duty but, on the contrary, the latter logically precedes the former.[20] The gods are seen as nothing but fictitious verbal entities made to serve the religious activities on two levels - a technical-narrow one and psychological-broader one. On the narrow level the gods are verbal designators, helping to differentiate one religious activity from all others. (Śābara states explicitly that the gods do not help to perform the religious rituals in their material form but rather in their verbal form, that is, by their names.[21]) On the broader level, the gods can be described as the recipients of the various sacrifices, prayers and chants - thus answering the psychological inclination of all those naive believers who find it difficult to understand that religious duty does not serve any external purpose beyond itself.

The emphasis laid by the Mīmāṃsā on the injunctive character of religious language brings Śābara to a bold conclusion concerning the truth-value of all the stories which are to be found in the Vedas. Among other things, these stories mention some biographical details on the life of certain persons from the past. It may, consequently, appear that the Vedas were composed at a definite time which is later than the lifetime of these persons. Hence the Vedas could not be regarded as eternal and infallible.[22] Confronting this difficulty, Śābara does not hesitate to adopt an extreme conclusion - one which would certainly have been regarded as heresy in other religions. He claims that the occurrences portrayed in the Vedic stories, in fact, never happened.[23] Accordingly, he interprets the names of these persons allegorically and uses once again all his casuistic skills to present them as verbal means only for the performance of religious duties.

At this stage I would like to dwell upon some of the philosophical implications of the Mīmāṃsā position. As I have pointed out, the Mīmāṃsā reduces religious language to the imperative mood only, and thus religion is presented as a closed system of commands which do not stem from any external source and do not serve any transcendent purpose. Many scholars of Indian philosophy found this rigid conception of religion unsatisfactory. Radhakrishnan, for example, described the Mīmāṃsā religion as "mechanical" and "unsound", lamenting that "there is little in such a religion to touch the heart and make it glow."[24] The religious position of Jaimini and Śābara was

often presented in similar ways. It was seen as an authoritarian approach that does not try to supply any justification whatsoever for its demand for unconditional obedience. The Mīmāṃsā believer was pictured as a trained soldier whose only task is to blindly obey orders - fulfilling his duties exactly as he was told.[25] Furthermore, it appears as if the believer is prohibited from reflecting upon the reasons for his actions which, by definition, are devoid of any purpose beyond themselves. In short, the common criticism of the Mīmāṃsā religion is that it is a military-like religion and as such valueless.

This line of criticism seems to me to be based on a conceptual confusion. As I have said, the Mīmāṃsā's critics drew a parallel between religious imperatives and military orders. The latter, it is true, are usually expressed in the imperative mood but, in my opinion, they differ considerably from religious commands. Since I consider this difference to be important in the understanding of the Mīmāṃsā religion I shall dwell on it in some detail.

One of the components that makes a military order obligatory and binding has nothing to do with its grammatical form. A military order is considered as obligatory when it is given by a recognized source of authority. In other words, an utterance will be regarded as a military order if and only if it is commanded by someone who is properly authorized to do so according to the rules of the military institution. Moreover, an essential characteristic of a military order is that its source of authority must be *directly* and *positively* defined by the rules of the military institution; military commands will become ambigious if and when their source is not so determined.

The issue is quite different when we turn from military orders to the religious injunctions of the Mīmāṃsā. As stated above the Mīmāṃsā asserts that the injunctions do not stem from any external source. They are not granted their authority by virtue of being handed down by some divine power. On the contrary, they are authoritative precisely because they were *not* given by such a power. As such, the authority of the scriptures is defined by using a *double negation:* 'One should obey the injunctions because they were not given by any unauthorized souce.'

The distinction between military orders and religious commands lies in the difference between two distinct definitions of the source of authority for these imperatives. It may appear, at first glance, that this difference is merely a matter of terminology, for certainly, from a logical point of view, the equation '$P = \sim(\sim P)$' is a tautology. However, if judged from a religious point of view, the difference between direct and affirmative language on the one hand and a 'double negation' language on the other hand is not incidental. Consider, for example, that instead of asserting that a military order should be obeyed because it was given by an authorized person A, we will say that it must be obeyed because it was *not* given by *un*authorized persons B, C, or D. Defining the source of military authority via a double negation would in fact undermine that source and consequently deal a serious blow to the effectiveness of the military commands. For military orders usually serve as as means for achieving certain aims and, so far as I know, any same commander will not regard them as ends-in-themselves (even most extreme military regimes which may claim the army to be an end-in-itself, do not hesitate, when necessary, to rely on its weapons). It follows that any attempt

to define the source of authority of military orders must take into account that these orders are intended to achieve certain aims, the existence of which is independent of the orders themselves. To put it differently, military commands regulate an independently existing set of objectives. Using the double negation in order to define their source of authority will not, to say the least, contribute towards the achievement of these objectives.

Matters are quite different when one considers the religious position of the Mīmāṃsā. As I have argued, the Mīmāṃsā refrains from any direct answer to the question concerning the reasons for obeying the religious imperatives or, to put it more generally, the reasons for belief. Instead it expresses its answer in purely negative terms. I think that by doing so the Mīmāṃsā, far from being evasive, outlines a fundamental feature of its doctrine. Religious laws stand in direct contradition, not to say confrontation, to all regulative laws according to which many social institutions operate. Thus religion does not intend to gratify human needs, nor does it intend to provide man with any kind of information. Instead, religious laws are presented as ends-in-themselves and the observance of the injunctions is not a means of attaining a goal, but itself constitutes the goal. Since the Mīmāṃsā is well aware of the fact that for most people religion is a way in which they express their inner states of mind as well as a means by which they hope to achieve their aims, it is evident that the crux of the Mīmāṃsā religion is an alternative to all these popular conceptions of religion.

The Mīmāṃsā, then, establishes religion as a constitutive institution. How did Jaimini and Śābara come to this conclusion? In my opinion, a brief answer to that question can be summarized in the following formula: 'religious institution = linguistic institution'. In order to understand the meaning of the formula we must carefully examine the fifth *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, in which Jaimini says, among other things:

> The connection between a word and its meaning is natural. The (Vedic) injunctions are, therefore, the only means of knowing duty (*dharma*).[26]

In the first sentence of the above *sūtra* Jaimini suggests the basis for a theory of meaning which will be accepted, almost without exception, by all the Mīmāṃsā philosophers. The crux of this theory lies in the Sanskrit term *autpatika*, which I have translated as 'natural' and which can also be translated as 'inborn' or 'innate'. In his commentary on this *sūtra* Śābara explains clearly the core of Jaimini's conception of meaning: the meaning of language, he argues, is not a result of some implicit accord or convention between the users of language, but rather a 'natural' or 'innate' idea. The ways we use language and our ability to make connection between a word and its meaning are due to the existence of an inborn linguistic capacity which enables us to follow the rules of meaning and thus to use language in everyday life. As I have hinted above, this approach of Jaimini was later adopted by philosophers of the Mīmāṃsā school and served as a starting-point for discussions in the field of philosophy of language. At first sight it would appear that we are confronted with a respectable philosophical theory of meaning which may exist in its own right. However, it is not inappropriate to ask whether Jaimini's intention was purely philosophical. The answer, I think, is in the negative.

I believe that one should not disregard the fact that Jaimini's conception

of meaning was offered within a religious context. This fact is explicitly presented in the *sūtra* quoted above, where the injunctive character of religious duty (stated in the second sentence of the *sūtra*) is directly derived from the 'innate' nature of language (stated in the first sentence). It is surprising that this connection between the Mīmāṃsā's theory of meaning and its approach to religion was ignored in recent discussions of Indian philosophy of language.

What is the meaning of the equation between language and religion? It should be remembered that according to Jaimini, the understanding of the nature of religion is entirely dependent upon an understanding of the nature of language. To put it crudely, the structure of religion is identical to the structure of language. Language is characterized as stemming from an inborn capacity which determines the relation between words and their meanings. Thus, language cannot be explained only as a means for achieving certain external goals (such as communication), or as a set of rules which regulates some pre-existing activity. On the contrary, the rules of language constitute the linguistic activity and the latter is therefore logically dependent on linguistic rules. Religious imperatives are constitutive in the same way; they command activities which can be defined and explained only by means of the imperatives themselves. Such a religion has no place either for a personal God or for a non-personal ultimate Being. Presenting the idea of Transcendence through the front-door of the religious institution or smuggling it through its back-door will inevitably reduce religious worship to the minor role of a means for achieving God's grace or for attaining some mystical union with the ultimate Being. In that case, the imperatives would have to be regarded as rules which regulate the religious activities towards achieving those transcendent goals. The Mīmāṃsā finds such a religion totally unacceptable and thus insists that religion should be devoid of any transcendent entity whatever. The scriptures, it is true, are regarded as eternal and infallible, but as they have no author or validator, the imperatives contained therein have no purpose beyond themselves. The injunctions are 'eternal' in the same structural way as the meaning of the words are 'innate'; by which I mean that neither language nor religion can be explained or justified by using the terms and concepts belonging to another institution. The injunctive character of the religious language is, according to the Mīmāṃsā, a clear demonstration of the totality of religion.

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NOTES

1. See *Samaraicca-Kaha*, II. 55 ff.
2. See for example, S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, London, 1963, p. 405.
3. For a Sanskrit edition of Jaimini's *sūtras* and Śābara's commentary, see: *Mīmāṃsādarśana with the Commentary of Śābara*, (ed. R. G. Bhatta), 2 Vols., Benares, 1910. The *sūtras*, without the commentary, were edited and translated by M. L. Sandal, *The Mīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jaimini*, Sacred Books of the Hindus, Vol. 27, 1925 (reprinted by AMS Press, New York, 1973). An English translation of Jaimini's *sūtras* and Śābara's commentary was made by G. Jha (tr.), *Śābara-Bhāṣya*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Vols. LXVI, LXX, LXXIII, Baroda, 1933 - 1936.
4. *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* (=*M.S.*0 I.1.1.: "*athāto dharma jijñāsā.*"
5. *M. S.* I.1.2.: "*codanā lakṣano artho dharmaḥ*".
6. See for example Śābara's commentary on *M.S.* 1.2.18.
7. *M. S.* I.3.30: "*prayogacodanābhāvāt arthaikatvam abibhāgāt*".
8. *M.S.* I.2.1.: "*amnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām; tasmat anityam iti ucyate.*"
9. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S.*I.2.1.
10. *Op. cit*, 1.2.2 - 1.2.3.
11. *M.S.*1.2.7: "*vidhinā tvekavākyatvāt stutyarthena vidhīnam syuḥ*". See also *M.S.* 1.2.8 - 1.2.18.
12. See *M.S.* 1.2.10. Jaimini uses the term *guṇavādaḥ* - meaning a figurative or allegorical way of speech.
13. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S.* 1.2.10.
14. See for example *M.S.*II.1.30 - II.1.31 and Śābara's commentary.
15. See *M.S.* I.1.18 ff: I.1.27 - I.1.32 and Śābara's commentary. See also *Sarva-Darśana-Samgraha* (tr. E. B. Cowell and A. E. Gough), Delhi, 1976, pp. 187 - 195.
16. E. Deutsch and J. A. B. van Buitenen, *A Source Book of Advaita Vedānta*, Honolulu, 1971, p. 5.
17. "*prayena iva hi mīmāṃsā lokāyatīkṛta; tāmāstikythe kīrumayam yatnah krto maya*" (Kumārila's *Ślokavārtika*, 1.10, ed. K. D. Sastri, Trivandrum, 1926.
18. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S.* VIII.1.34.
19. *Op. cit*: "*rajapupusah pūjyah*".
20. See for example, Śābara's commentary on *M.S.* X.4.23.
21. *ibid*
22. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S.* I.2.5.
23. *Op. cit* on M.S. *I.1.31.*
24. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, London, 1931, pp. 428 - 429.
25. See for example, K. H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*, New York, 1963, p. 250.

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26. *M.S.* I.1.5.: *''autpatikastu śabdasyārthena sambandhah; tasya jñānam upadeśaḥ avyatirekaḥ ca arthe anupalabdhe.*

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RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA: SOME PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

What is the traditional relation of religion to politics in India? Recent scholarly debate has generated at least two divergent answers. According to one view there is a long standing traditional opposition between religion and politics in India because its highest value (*mokṣa*) is renunciatory and asocial. According to another view a separation of religion from politics is contrary to Indian ways of thinking and the present currency of such a picture is the product of various colonialist strategies.

I want to address the question from the perspective of classical Indian philosophy. To be able do so, however, I shall also need to utilize some work in Western philosophy. In particular, I need to say something about the crucial terms 'religion' and 'politics' and their relevance to the classical Indian tradition. My theoretical approach will be influenced by Western philosophy but my historical focus will be on the Sanskrit philosophical tradition. In this sense there are two distinct philosophical perspectives offered here.

I shall proceed by initially responding to two distinct kinds of scepticism about the relevance of the concepts of religion and politics to the Indian context. The first kind is a general scepticism about the intelligibility of these concepts: do the terms 'religion' and 'politics' really pick out anything at all? If this scepticism is sustainable, then ipso facto the concepts can have no relevance to the Indian context.

I argue that this general scepticism about the concepts of religion and politics is mistaken. Moreover the form of my response to this general scepticism has implications for the second kind of scepticism I want to respond to. This latter restricted scepticism does not deny the general intelligibility of the concepts of religion and politics. Rather it just denies their applicability to the classical Indian context because there are no precisely equivalent Sanskrit categories and terms. But this restricted scepticism assumes far too stringent requirements have to be satisfied for the concepts to be able to be counted as instantiated in India. Plausibly the relevant Sanskrit notions are *artha* and *dharma* for politics, and *mokṣa* and *dharma* for religion. How are these Sanskrit notions related according to the classical Indian philosophers? The short answer is that the classical tradition is not monolithic: different philosophers give different answers.

One classical Indian philosophical view emphasizes the continuity of *dharma* and *mokṣa*. An alternative view emphasizes the opposition between *dharma* and *mokṣa*. The classical Indian philosophical tradition thus seems to

offer at least two major strands of thought on the relation of religion and politics: according to one the two notions are continuous, according to the other they are opposed. Both positions, however, are authentically indigenous and predate colonial influence. Moreover both strands of thought continued to have influence in medieval and modern India. In other words, responding to the recent debate it is important to realize that there is no *single* traditional Indian perspective on the issue of religion and politics.

I

Social scientists and historians of India are currently engaged in a debate about the extent to which the present prominence of issues of caste and community in contemporary Indian politics is continuous with the pre-colonial past, or instead represents a transformation brought about by colonialism.[1] This debate is complicated by the fact that scholars of traditional Indian history and society are also divided about what the relation of religion and politics was in ancient times. The debate is somewhat intricate and nuanced. Nevertheless we can rather crudely, but not unhelpfully, identify two opposing camps: the *separatists* and the *assimilators*.

Occupying a place of honour in the separatist camp we find the extremely influential views of the distinguished sociologist Louis Dumont, according to which at a very early date India distinguished religion from politics.[2] This distinction then supposedly became crucial for the development of the caste system, for caste is about the 'religious' opposition of purity and impurity. In India religious values are acknowledged as superior to political values, the *brāhmaṇa* priest as superior to the *kṣatriya* warrior and king. Also prominent in the separatist camp is the Indologist J. C. Heesterman, who argues for a related but distinct thesis: that India's highest value is renunciatory and hence asocial.[3] The separatists, then, take as canonical the perspective of the brahminical textual tradition with its valourization of the renunciatory order over the 'kingly', and hence of religion over politics.

Their critics among the assimilators challenge this separation of religion from politics. Hence a number of writers have claimed that the origins of caste are to be found in a political context of kingship. Apposite here is Arthur Hocart's earlier theory that caste systems are ways of distributing through the system duties connected with the king's service, where the king is the guarantor of 'life' and well-being.[4] More recently the historian Nicholas Dirks has argued that the prevalent ideology in pre-colonial India was not a religious one based on purity and pollution, but a political one based on

[1] See, for instance, Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, 'Modern Hate' *The New Republic* March 22, 1993, pp. 24–29.

[2] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[3] J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[4] A. M. Hocart, *Caste: A Comparative Study* (London: Methuen, 1950).

royal authority and honour.[5] Ronald Inden has sought to explain the earlier Indological focus on caste as part of an 'Orientalist' strategy designed to make the traditional Indian state look weaker than it ever was.[6] And modern Indian intellectuals like T. N. Madan and Ashis Nandy have claimed that the separation of religion and politics now reflected in modern India's constitutionally guaranteed secularism is a Western-derived model alien to the Indian tradition, a product of various colonialist strategies.[7] Finally, the influential work of the anthropologist McKim Marriott is also often invoked in support of the view that the separation of religion and politics, or power from purity, is contrary to Indian ways of thinking.[8]

Notwithstanding the interest of much of this work, I am sceptical about the terms of the present debate. It seems to me that neither the separatists nor the assimilators adequately represent the diversity of traditional Indian thinking about religion and politics. However, I do also want to be careful to distinguish my own scepticism from other varieties of scepticism about the terms of the debate: in particular, certain kinds of scepticism about the very relevance of the concepts of religion and politics to the Indian context. Hence I shall proceed by initially responding to two distinct kinds of scepticism of this latter type, both rather different from my own view.

The first kind is a general scepticism about the very intelligibility of the concepts of religion and politics: do the terms 'religion' and 'politics' really pick out anything at all? Obviously if this general scepticism is sustainable, then ipso facto the concepts can have no relevance to the Indian context. But does anyone actually hold a sceptical view of this sort? I am not sure I can convincingly nominate an exemplar of such scepticism about *both* concepts. However, the work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith represents an influential example of such a scepticism about the concept of religion; and Marxism represents an example of such a scepticism about the concept of politics.

According to Cantwell Smith the concept of religion is an eighteenth century European construction totally inadequate to the phenomena it supposedly describes.[9] This is particularly true of the notion of 'a religion' as a clear and bounded historical phenomenon, reified as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc. Cantwell Smith has two basic arguments for his position. His first argument is theological: the notion of 'a religion' is an outside observer's characterization of religious life; it leaves out the relation

[5] Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); 'The Original Caste: Power, History and Hierarchy in South Asia' in McKim Marriott (ed.), *India Through Hindu Categories* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

[6] Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

[7] T. N. Madan, 'Secularism in its Place' *Journal of Asian Studies* 46 (1988): 747–760; Ashis Nandy, 'An Anti-Secular Manifesto' in John Hick and Lamont Hempel (eds.), *Gandhi's Significance for Today* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

[8] McKim Marriott (ed.), *India Through Hindu Categories* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

[9] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Mentor, 1963), especially Ch. 5.

of religious life to what cannot be observed, the transcendent. This argument, however, apparently commits the study of religion to affirming the existence of the transcendent, a commitment many would find both methodologically unattractive and philosophically dubious.

His second argument he calls 'historical', but in fact the argument depends upon a philosophical thesis. He claims that the notion of religion requires the existence of an unchanging Aristotelian-style essence which is picked out by the term 'religion'. But there are no such essences and hence we cannot define 'religion'. More particularly, unchanging essences 'do not have a history' while 'what have been called the religions do, in history, change'.[10] The term 'Hinduism', for instance, does not refer to an essence; it is just the name the West has given to a highly variegated complex of facts. In this sense, Cantwell Smith claims, Hinduism as a historical reality cannot be defined and the concept of a 'religion' called 'Hinduism' is entirely inadequate to the historical phenomena.

Cantwell Smith's scepticism about the concept of religion has some interesting parallels with Marxist scepticism about the concept of politics. Marxism is sceptical about the concept of politics because Marxism denies that there is a permanent and autonomous feature of society called 'politics'.[11] More specifically, Marxism denies that politics is a persisting feature of every form of society. It claims, furthermore, that where something that might be described as 'politics' does exist, it is not something that can be studied in isolation from the rest of society. Finally, as a practical programme of reform, Marxism seeks the *abolition* of what others call 'politics'.

For my present purposes the feature of the Marxist position that I want to highlight is the way in which Marxism challenges the fundamental assumption of the traditional academic discipline of Politics: viz. that there is a permanent and autonomous feature of all societies which is politics. For Marxists the existence of politics is coterminous with the existence of classes, since politics is the process through which classes with conflicting interests seek to control state power. In this sense politics is necessarily associated with the existence of the state, conceived of as an apparatus of coercion, and the existence of classes. But both the state and classes are comparatively recent phenomena in human history. Moreover Marxism holds that the existence of classes is bound up with certain historical phases in the development of production that will eventually disappear, creating a classless society and hence the abolition of the state.

Marxists, then, are sceptical about the very concept of politics for not so dissimilar reasons to why Cantwell Smith is sceptical about the concept of religion. Both assume that if the concepts are to be intelligible, then there

[10] Cantwell Smith, p. 130.

[11] For a lucid presentation of the Marxist position see Alex Callinicos, 'Marxism and Politics' in Adrian Leftwich (ed.), *What is Politics?* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

must be some unchanging essence which they pick out; both deny that there is any such essence; and both appeal to considerations of historical change in support of this denial. In other words, a certain shared historicist anti-essentialism can generate a scepticism about the very concepts of religion and politics. I shall argue, however, that a denial of essentialism need not commit us to this kind of scepticism. There is a plausible alternative philosophical account of general terms like 'religion' and 'politics' which does not imply essentialism and hence cannot be used to generate a general scepticism about the concepts of religion and politics.

II

The notion of essence needs to be located with reference to the broader philosophical problem of universals. The concept of an essence was introduced into Western philosophy by Aristotle to answer questions of the form 'What is *X*?'. The answer offered was that any *X* could be defined in terms of its *essence*, where an essence is what a thing is by its very nature, what gives it its identity and makes it what it is (for Aristotle the essence could be identified with substance). Definitions, then, pick out the unchanging properties that constitute the identity of the thing to be defined. Seventeenth century philosophers like Hobbes and Locke saw themselves as breaking with Aristotelianism when they insisted that definitions are not of things, but of names. They sought to rephrase the older question about things ('What is *X*?') into a question about the meaning of words ('What is meant by the term "*X*"?'). In Locke's terminology, they gave up the search for real essences in favour of nominal essences, where the term 'nominal essence' refers to the idea of the property or properties the possession of which justifies the application of a given name.[12]

This project of definition in terms of essential properties connects directly with the traditional problem of universals. Basically this is the problem of whether there are repeatable properties. That is, whether in addition to particular entities, like the two red apples before me, there are also properties, like redness, that such particulars can have in common. *Realists* say there are; *nominalists* say there are not.

The problem of universals is perhaps best posed in ontological terms: what makes a number of particular things all, say, red? Realists say it is because they all share the common property (or universal) redness. Nominalists deny the existence of such universals, but disagree among themselves as to the details of the correct positive account of the matter. The problem of uni-

[12] There are some interesting parallels between this Western philosophical project of definition in terms of essential properties and Indian philosophical treatments of definition (especially in Navya-nyāya): see Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logic, Language and Reality* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), pp. 164–202; Frits Staal, *Universals: Studies in Indian Logic and Linguistics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Ch. 4.

versals is also sometimes, less happily, posed in linguistic terms: why do we call a number of particular things all, say, 'red'? Realists say it is because the general term 'red' picks out a common property (the universal redness) shared by all those particulars. Nominalists again deny the existence of this common property, but disagree intramurally about the details of the correct positive account.

One popular nominalist programme is *resemblance nominalism*.[13] The fundamental idea of the programme is that we can substitute for universals a network of resemblance relations between particulars, relations that also admit of degree. There are various proposals on offer about the details of how to construct a resemblance class. Rudolf Carnap suggested we can construct universals as 'similarity circles' of particulars.[14] Such a circle consists of a set of particulars, all of which are more similar to one another than they all are to any one thing outside the set. That is, each non-member of the circle differs more from some member than that member differs from any member.

H. H. Price offered a somewhat different account utilizing the notion of certain standard objects or 'exemplars' such that the resemblance class consists in all and only those particulars which sufficiently resemble the exemplars.[15] W. V. Quine's account is a close relative which utilizes both the notion of certain standard objects ('paradigms') and certain standard non-members of the resemblance class ('foils'). The resemblance class or kind can then be defined thus: '*the kind with paradigm a and foil b* is the set of all the things to which *a* is more similar than *a* is to *b*'.[16]

More concretely, then, consider the following brief sketch of a resemblance nominalist account of how we might analyze the properties general terms supposedly refer to in terms of a resemblance class of particulars constructed in a special fashion. (This sketch draws heavily on the accounts offered by Carnap, Price and Quine, but is not quite identical with any of them.)

To construct the similarity circle that, say, the property of redness is to be analyzed in terms of we begin with a small set of standard objects: perhaps, as Price suggests, 'a certain tomato, a certain brick and a certain British post-box'.[17] Call these three particulars *A*, *B* and *C*. Now a red object is any object that resembles *A*, *B* and *C* at least as closely as they resemble each other. An object fails to be a member of the similarity circle of red things if it is less similar to one of the paradigm objects than that paradigm object is to any other paradigm object. (Generally we have available some paradigm

[13] Popular, but by no means universally accepted. For some criticisms of the theory see, for instance, D. M. Armstrong, *Nominalism and Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 48–57; *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 49–58.

[14] Rudolf Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), sections 70–73. (The German original of this work was published in 1928 as *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt.*)

[15] H. H. Price, *Thinking and Experience* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), Ch. 1.

[16] W. V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 119–120.

[17] Price, p. 20.

non-member, or foil, when constructing a resemblance class, but in theory it would be logically possible for the class to consist of a single member which is the only object in the world. In that case, since resemblance is a reflexive relation, the object would still resemble itself and constitute an attenuated sort of similarity circle.)

A class can have alternative sets of paradigm objects : for the class of red objects, for instance, we might have also 'a certain bit of sealing wax, a certain blushing face and a certain summer sky'.[18] In fact it is normally the case that different people work with different paradigm sets. Again, all that is required is that any member of the class of red things should resemble that set of paradigm objects at least as much as *they* resemble each other. Since resemblance admits of degrees, however, particular members of the class of red things may cluster more closely around one paradigm rather than another, sometimes encouraging scepticism about the unity of the class.

What is the relevance of all this for the general scepticism about the concepts of religion and politics that we were considering earlier? Basically it is that that general scepticism arises from a misconception about the implications of anti-essentialism. The mistaken assumption was that the concepts of religion and politics can only be intelligible if they pick out some real essence. If there are no such unchanging essential properties, then the concepts pick out nothing at all. But an alternative resemblance nominalist account of how to construct properties in terms of similarity circles of particulars provides us with a more fruitful way of characterizing the concepts of religion and politics. On this view the concepts pick out similarity circles of particular phenomena which resemble each other in different degrees. When we speak of different things having a common property, we need not thereby imply there is one property identically present in all things to which we apply the same word. Rather all we require are similarities between them sufficient to entitle us to use the same word to describe them all.

Moreover the similarity circle model acknowledges the historicity of the notions it analyzes, for the construction of a resemblance class takes place over time and often involves the use of different sets of paradigms. This feature explains the development of notions which involve classes that may seem to lack unity. Take, for instance, the notion *Hinduism*, a notion so difficult to define that some have suggested it to be unintelligible, even appealing to this alleged unintelligibility as evidence of the unintelligibility of the concept of religion itself. I suggest, however, that the term 'Hinduism' picks out a relevant similarity circle of phenomena. The alleged lack of unity of this class of phenomena is a misperception caused by the multiplicity of paradigms around which the similarity circle has been constructed over time. Accordingly some phenomena within the resemblance class cluster together

[18] Price, p. 22.

more closely than others, even though all the phenomena are sufficiently similar to count as members of the similarity circle we call 'Hinduism'. A similar state of affairs obtains, I suggest, for 'religion'. The terms do not need to refer to unchanging essences to be intelligible.

(For an analogy with the way in which a resemblance class can grow over time as new paradigms are added consider the case of Van Meegeren's forged Vermeers. How could such forgeries, many of which do not resemble very closely any known genuine Vermeers, ever have been taken for genuine Vermeers? It is because the relevant perceptual comparison for attributing authenticity was visual similarity between the class of known Vermeers and the class of other paintings. Once a single Van Meegeren had been mistakenly added to the precedent class of known Vermeers the addition of further Van Meegerens was inevitable: for each new Van Meegeren did in turn resemble the successively expanded paradigm set as much as the members of that set resembled each other.[19] Of course, the important difference in the Van Meegeren case is that authenticity requires more than just visual similarity to a set of paradigms.)

The concept of politics also involves a similarity circle of particular phenomena. Once again, failure to recognize the multiplicity of paradigms can lead to fruitless disagreements about the essence of politics, or even to a scepticism about the unity of the class of political phenomena. Thus some people seek to define politics primarily in terms of a *process*, others in terms of an *arena*.[20] The former will correspondingly be led to see politics as a much more generalized process in human societies, whereas the latter will tend to regard politics as confined to certain activities that occur within a special kind of forum (the state, governmental institutions, etc.). But both sets of paradigm phenomena are part of the similarity circle that constructs the notion of politics and the obvious dissimilarities between some of these phenomena should not be allowed to obscure the existence of a network of relevant similarities which unify the resemblance class.

The resemblance nominalist account of how to construct properties in terms of similarity circles provides us, then, with a more fruitful way of characterizing the concepts of religion and politics than the essentialist programme does. Moreover the account offered undercuts the assumption that the rejection of essences implies a general scepticism about the intelligibility of those concepts.

III

The resemblance nominalist account outlined above also has implications for the second kind of scepticism I want to respond to. This restricted scepticism does not deny the general intelligibility of the concepts of religion

[19] Cf. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), pp. 109–111.
[20] Adrian Leftwich, 'Introduction: On the Politics of Politics' in Leftwich, *What is Politics?*, p. 10.

and politics. Rather it just denies their applicability to the classical Indian context because there are no precisely equivalent Sanskrit categories and terms. Thus Gerald Larson, for instance, claims: 'The notion of "religion" in South Asia derives largely from Islamic and Christian traditions and has no precise analogue in South Asia prior to the coming of Islam. Moreover, the linkage of the notion of "religion" with the notion of "Hindu" is also problematic.'[21] Self-avowedly following the Rudolphs and Frykenberg on this, Larson declares himself 'inclined to agree that notions such as the "Hindu majority", Hindu religion and "Hinduism" are largely an "artifact of categorization" that have generated a variety of conceptual muddles and have tended to direct our studies into "trackless deserts of nonsense"'.[22]

Now it is plausibly true that there are no *precisely equivalent* Sanskrit categories and terms for a number of Western concepts and categories, including perhaps religion and politics.[23] But this should be no cause for alarm. This sort of restricted scepticism about the applicability of the concepts of religion and politics to the Indian context assumes far too stringent requirements have to be satisfied for the concepts to be able to be counted as instantiated in India. All we need philosophically are instances of Sanskrit notions sufficiently close to form part of the relevant similarity circles which construct the concepts of religion and politics.

Plausibly the relevant Sanskrit notions are *artha* and *dharma* for politics, and *mokṣa* and *dharma* for religion. Then the question about the traditional relation of religion and politics in India becomes the question of how these three Sanskrit notions are related. I shall only concern myself, however, with the more specific question of how these Sanskrit notions are related according to the classical Indian philosophers. The short answer is that the classical tradition is not monolithic: different philosophers give different answers.

First of all, a preliminary remark about what I shall be counting as 'classical Indian philosophy'. Predictably enough, I follow well-established precedent and include within the scope of the term the classical *darśanas* (here especially Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta); also the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, since we are obviously concerned here with classical Indian social and political philosophy, I shall count as philosophical texts too the relevant portions of the Dharmaśāstras and the *Arthaśāstra*.

[21] Gerald James Larson, 'Discourse about "Religion" in Colonial and Postcolonial India' in Ninian Smart and Shivesh Thakur (eds.), *Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 181.

[22] Larson, p. 184. The works by the Rudolphs and Frykenberg to which Larson refers are: Lloyd I. and Susan H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'The Emergence of Modern "Hinduism" as a Concept and as an Institution: A Reappraisal with Special Reference to South India' in G. D. Sontheimer and H. Kulke (eds.), *Hinduism Reconsidered* (Delhi: Manohar, 1991).

[23] For an interesting cross-cultural discussion of two important terms see Hajime Nakamura, 'The Meanings of the Terms "Philosophy" and "Religion" in Various Traditions' in Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch (eds.), *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

The classical Indian philosophers so understood, then, give different answers to the question of the relation of religion and politics. One answer emphasizes the continuity of religion and politics. This is the position of the Dharmaśāstras and of the *Arthaśāstra*. According to this view *dharma* is the key political notion since *artha* serves *dharma*; but *dharma* leads inexorably to *mokṣa*. Thus there is a natural continuity between politics and religion.

The Hindu political philosophers, for instance, acknowledged that the religious goal of *mokṣa* is the ultimate end of human activity, but also insisted that *artha* and *dharma* are legitimate intermediate worldly goals which, if properly pursued, lead to *mokṣa*.[24] Thus the *Arthaśāstra* acknowledges *artha* or material wealth as an important instrumental value insofar as it enables the performance of *dharma* and the enjoyment of pleasure (*kāma*). However, it is *dharma* that is the superior value, for it is the way to heaven and salvation:

[The observance of] one's *dharma* leads to heaven and eternal bliss. When *dharma* is transgressed, the resulting chaos leads to the extermination of this world. Whoever upholds his own *dharma*, adheres to the customs of the Aryas and follows the rules of the *varnas* and the stages of life, will find joy here and in the hereafter. For the world, when maintained in accordance with the Vedas, will ever prosper and not perish. Therefore, the king shall never allow the people to swerve from their *dharma*.[25]

Accordingly the king's duty is to maintain the order and stability necessary for the people to promote their economic well-being and practise *dharma*. Such order is upheld by proper use of *daṇḍa* ('the rod'), i.e. by the just use of force to punish breaches of the rules of *dharma*: 'The people of a society, whatever their *varna* or stage of life, will follow their own *dharma* and pursue with devotion their occupations, if they are protected by the king and the just use of *danda* [coercion and punishment]'.[26]

The content of a person's particular *svadharma* is determined, of course, by his or her caste and stage of life, as laid down in the Dharmaśāstras.[27] The idea that the practice of *dharma* leads naturally to the attainment of *mokṣa* is there connected with the *āśrama* schema: the exclusive pursuit of *mokṣa* is placed at the end of life after a lifetime of selfless practice of one's *dharma* has enabled the cultivation of the requisite self-discipline and detachment. Indeed the *Manusmṛti* goes so far as to insist:

A man who has gone from one stage of life to another, made the offerings into the fire, conquered his sensory powers, exhausted himself by giving alms and propitiat-

[24] Useful studies of Indian political theory include: D. Mackenzie Brown, *The White Umbrella: Indian Political Thought from Manu to Gandhi* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953); John W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); U. N. Ghosal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, corrected ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Beni Prasad, *Theory of Government in Ancient India*, 2nd revised ed., (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1968).

[25] *Arthaśāstra* 1.3.14–17; *Kautilya: The Arthashastra*, ed. & trans. L. N. Rangarajan (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 107–108.

[26] *Arthaśāstra* 1.4.16; Rangarajan, p. 99.

[27] On the details of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* schema see, for instance, *Arthaśāstra* 1.3.5–13; *Manusmṛti* 2–6, 10. A magisterial study of the Dharmaśāstras is P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2nd ed. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1968–75). See also Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

ory offerings, and then lived as a wandering ascetic - when he has died, he thrives. When a man has paid his three debts, he may set his mind-and-heart on Freedom [*mokṣa*]; but if he seeks Freedom when he has not paid the debts, he sinks down. When a man has studied the Veda in accordance with the rules, and begotten sons in accordance with his duty, and sacrificed with sacrifices according to his ability, he may set his heart-and mind on Freedom. But if a twice-born man seeks freedom when he has not studied the Vedas, and has not begotten progeny, and has not sacrificed with sacrifices, he sinks down.[28]

According to this traditional Indian view, then, religion is continuous with politics since *artha* subserves *dharma* and *dharma* is continuous with *mokṣa*. In other words, the tradition of the Dharmaśāstras and the *Arthaśāstra* seems to favour the assimilators' picture of traditional Indian thinking about the relation of religion and politics. Moreover the assimilators' picture seems also consonant with the somewhat different theory presented in the *Bhagavadgītā*, where once again political action is understood in terms of *dharma*. There, however, *mokṣa* itself is in turn defined in terms of *dharma*: specifically, one's caste-duty (*svadharma*) performed with the correct attitude of detachment (*niṣkāma-karma*). As Kṛṣṇa puts it:

By [doing] the work that is proper to him [and] rejoicing [in the doing], a man succeeds, perfects himself.... Better [to do] one's own [caste-] duty, though devoid of merit, than [to do] another's, however well-performed.... Never should a man give up the work to which he is born, defective though it may be: for every enterprise is choked by defects, as fire by smoke.[29]

But this is not the only view of the relation of religion and politics that is present in classical Indian philosophy. Common to the distinct views of the Dharmaśāstras and the *Arthaśāstra* on the one hand, and the *Bhagavadgītā* on the other, is the assumption of an internal relation between *dharma* and *mokṣa* and thus between politics and religion. This assumption is challenged by various Indian philosophers, with an alternative answer emphasizing the opposition between *dharma* and *mokṣa*.[30]

One variant on this is the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā position that *dharma* is an intrinsic value, an end and not a means. Virtue consists in practising *dharma* for its own sake, not for the sake of any benefits (like *mokṣa*) that might accrue to the agent.[31] The Prābhākara school then identifies *dharma* with the performance of the obligatory actions (*nitya-karma*) and the avoidance of the forbidden (*pratiṣiddha-karma*), where what is obligatory and forbidden is determined by the Vedic injunctions. In this sense, then, *dharma* and *mokṣa* are not continuous, and hence neither are politics and religion.

[28] *Manusmṛti* 6·34–37; Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith, trans., *The Laws of Manu* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 120–121.

[29] *Bhagavadgītā* 18·45–48; R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gītā* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 106–107.

[30] On this issue see J. A. B. van Buitenen, '*Dharma* and *Mokṣa*' *Philosophy East and West* 7 (1957): 33–40; Daniel H. H. Ingalls, '*Dharma* and *Mokṣa*' *Philosophy East and West* 7 (1957): 41–48.

[31] Cf. M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Conception of Values* (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1975), pp. 210–217. For a general reconstruction of the Prābhākara school of philosophy see Ganganatha Jha, *The Prābhākara School of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978).

The Prābhākara position, however, is very much a minority opinion in the Indian tradition. The great Advaitin philosopher Śaṃkara famously criticizes as psychologically implausible the implication that free virtuous action has no end in view. Moreover, Śaṃkara argues, on the Prābhākara view duty becomes a drudgery, since performance of it means toil and non-performance means future suffering.[32] Far more influential in the Indian tradition is Śaṃkara's own position, which sharply opposes *dharma* and *mokṣa*, arguing that the demands of *dharma* are not binding on the seeker of *mokṣa* (the *saṃnyasin*).

This opposition between *dharma* and *mokṣa* is a logical consequence of the metaphysics of Advaita Vedānta. According to Advaita, *mokṣa* is just the realization of the essential identity of the self (*ātman*) and the Absolute (*Brahman*). But this implies *mokṣa* is a state of nonduality, whereas all action presupposes a duality between self and other. Thus *mokṣa* precludes action and hence also *dharma*, with its concern for obligatory and forbidden actions. Śaṃkara himself puts it this way in the *Upadeśasāhasrī*:

In fact action is incompatible with knowledge [of *Brahman*], since [it] is associated with misconception [of *Ātman*]. And knowledge [of *Brahman*] is declared here [in the Vedānta] to be the view that *Ātman* is changeless. [From the notion] 'I am agent; this is mine' arises action. Knowledge [of *Brahman*] depends upon the real, [whereas] the Vedic injunction depends upon an agent. Knowledge destroys the factors of action as it destroys the notion that there is water in the salt desert. After accepting this true view, [how] would one decide to perform action? Because of the incompatibility [of knowledge with action] a man who knows thus, being possessed of this knowledge, cannot perform action. For this reason action should be renounced by a seeker after final release.[33]

Śaṃkara does allow for the legitimacy of the demands of *dharma* on those still enmeshed in the worldly life. But for the renunciate *saṃnyasin*, who recognizes no distinctions, *dharma* and its injunctions have no authority. The knowledge of *Brahman* puts an end to all activity, including even religious ritual:

For Self-knowledge is inculcated through the obliteration of the very cause of rites, viz. the consciousness of all its means such as the gods. And one whose consciousness of action, its factors and so forth has been obliterated cannot presumably have the tendency to perform rites, for this presupposes a knowledge of specific actions, their means and so on. One who thinks that he is Brahman unlimited by space, time, etc. and not-gross and so on has no room for the performance of rites.[34]

Śaṃkara is, of course, completely rejecting the older Indian view that

[32] *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya*, 3·1; 4·18.

[33] *Upadeśasāhasri* I.i.12–15; Sengaku Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasri of Śaṅkara* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 104.

[34] *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya* I.1; Swāmī Mādhavānanda, trans., The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, 7th ed. (Delhi: Advaita Ashrama, 1988), p. 36. See also I.i.7: '... there is no scope for human activity as in the case of the new and full moon sacrifices etc., because that knowledge puts a stop to all activity' (Madhavananda, p. 89).

mokṣa is attained by a combination of knowledge and action (*jñānakarma-samuccaya*). Other Vedāntin philosophers are not quite so radical, but they too in a sense see *dharma* and *mokṣa* as opposed. Rāmānuja, for instance, agrees with Śaṃkara that liberation cannot be attained by the fulfilment of the obligations of *dharma*, thus denying the continuity of *dharma* and *mokṣa*. But Rāmānuja also allows a place for *dharma* on the path to *mokṣa*. His motivation here is theistic: he wishes to insist that liberation is dependent on God's grace and hence cannot be a direct effect of our actions. However, actions performed as divine worship may indirectly lead to release thanks to the grace of God: 'for works enjoined by Scripture have the power of pleasing the Supreme Person, and hence, through his grace, to cause the destruction of all mental impressions obstructive of calmness and concentration of mind'.[35] The knowledge of *Brahman* that the scriptures say leads to liberation is identified with meditation and meditative worship.

Although Rāmānuja thus denies that action can be a direct cause of release, he still insists (contrary to Śaṃkara) that one should never abandon the obligatory actions (*nitya-karma*) enjoined by *dharma*. However, he also concedes that these actions have no significance in themselves; it is the (devotional) intention of the agent that counts, not the result of the action. Thus he distinguishes his own position from the Mīmāṃsā view that the end of life is the performance of (ritual) duty: 'Knowledge of that [devotional] kind has not the most remote connexion even with works [in the Mīmāṃsā sense]'.[36]

Common to the different positions of Prābhākara, Śaṃkara and Rāmānuja is the rejection of the assumption of the continuity of *dharma* and *mokṣa*, and hence of politics and religion. In the case of Śaṃkara, we instead have a particularly sharp opposition of *dharma* and *mokṣa*, with variations of this position also maintained by other Vedāntins. This is the renunciant tradition, which stresses the opposition of politics and religion. Obviously it is a textual tradition that favours the separatists' picture of traditional Indian thinking about the relation of religion and politics.

IV

We can distinguish, then, two major strands of thought on the issue of religion and politics in the classical Indian philosophical tradition. One strand favours an internal relation of some sort between religion and politics. This is the view of the political theorists, of the Dharmaśāstrins, and of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The other strand favours an opposition of some sort between religion and politics. This is especially the view of the Advaitins, but also of some other Vedāntins.

[35] *Śrībhāṣya*, 3.4.27; George Thibaut, trans., *The Vedānta-Sūtras with the Commentary by Rāmānuja* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 701.

[36] *Śrībhāṣya*, 3.4.12; Thibaut, p. 692.

Both strands continue into the medieval period. The Islamic invasion, however, introduces into India a rather different picture of the relation between religion and politics; so too does British colonial rule. But with the Hindu Renaissance we see the revival of both of the main classical strands in the work of the major Hindu 'philosophers' of the subsequent period. Thus Gandhi takes the position that religion and politics are internally related, explicitly drawing on the tradition of the Dharmaśāstras and the *Gītā*. Aurobindo, on the other hand, renounces his political activities to pursue his yoga practice and compose his Vedāntin influenced philosophical writings, apparently accepting that religion and politics are in opposition. (Vivekananda may perhaps be represented as attempting a synthesis of the two classical traditions.)

The relevance of all this to the present scholarly debate about the traditional relation of religion and politics in India is obvious. However, it is perhaps particularly worth stressing its significance for the claim that contemporary attempts to oppose religion and politics in India are entirely a colonialist imposition incompatible with the indigenous tradition. The classical Indian philosophical tradition seems to offer at least two major strands of thought on the relation of religion and politics: according to one the two notions are continuous (just as the assimilators claim), according to the other the two notions are opposed (just as the separatists claim). Both positions are authentically indigenous and both predate colonial influence. In other words, there is no *one* traditional Indian perspective on the issue.[37]

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[37] This essay had its origins in a talk I gave at the 1995 'Religion and Politics in South Asia' conference held at Raetihi Lodge, Marlborough Sounds with financial support from the Asia 2000 Foundation. I would like to thank the members of 'The Raetihi Group' for their comments on my talk and for the stimulus of their conversation over that weekend. My special thanks to Bo Sax for inviting me to the conference and for setting out so sharply for me the lines of the debate to which this essay is a response.

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TOWARDS A PRAGMATICS OF MANTRA RECITATION

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper purports to investigate certain ritualistic acts of mantra recitation in the light of their family resemblances to more familiar everyday speech acts (such as promising, pardoning, naming, etc.), without thereby intending to minimize the differences between the ritual and the quotidian varieties of speech act or to suggest the reducibility without residue of the religious rites under consideration to the mere stipulation of a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for performing the speech acts which they contain.

Charles Morris' well known but not unproblematic trifurcation of semiotic into syntax, semantics and pragmatics, spawned a stepchild in the last member of the triad, which has only recently begun to receive the attention linguistic theory has long since accorded its siblings. That this attention was overdue was the consensus reached by the participants in the 1970 Jerusalem Symposium on Pragmatics of Natural Languages.[1] On the other hand, though there was agreement that the study of speech acts falls within its domain, questions as to the general lineaments, and proper sphere of application (much less the specific structural details) of the desiderated pragmatic theory remained (and continue to remain) very much open. Thus with full awareness that no description of the nature and content of pragmatics hazarded at present is likely to escape controversy, we provisionally adopt the following characterization of the field given by Stalnaker, on grounds of its clarity and breadth:

> Pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed. There are two major types of problems to be solved within pragmatics: first, to define interesting types of speech acts and speech products; second, to characterize the features of the speech context which help determine which proposition is expressed by a given sentence.[2]

This analysis focuses on a species of the first type of problem. It comprises a step in the direction of an explication of the illocutionary act(s) of mantra recitation, employing as an Ariadne's thread the corpus of empirical material

compiled by Stephan Beyer on the role of mantras in certain Tibetan Buddhist Tārā rituals,[3] and investigating and ordering this material via an adaptation of analytic techniques inspired by those of John Austin and John Searle.[4]

The programmatic nature of what follows is obvious enough; our exploration merely essays to provide a better perspective for assessing the feasibility and value of a *general* theory of ritual and religious utterances, one in which the formal apparatus central to, e.g., Richard Montague's systematization might perhaps find fruitful application. Without preliminary clarification behind us, however, it would be precipituous to attempt to decant the heady blend of conflicting varietals of descriptive data into the not yet fully blown bottles of formal theory.

This is not to denigrate the results of scholarly efforts of the past ten years, which have done much to make apprehensible to the non-initiate the multiplicity of types of mantras and their functionings – both within and beyond the context of rigorously structured ritual. But the best of these studies have been primarily Buddhological, philological or ethnological in their orientation – the philosophical and semiotic pay dirt has been unearthed only incidentally, if at all.

There is, of course, the already mentioned seminal undertaking of Beyer which, among many other things, alludes to, but does not extensively develop Dorothy Emmet's suggestive remarks on the 'performatory' (or 'performative') nature of certain words which figure in religious rituals.[5] Jan Gonda's philologically tinted taxonomy of the Indian mantra,[6] incorporating Hindu and Avestan, as well as Budhist sources, also comes to mind. Too, A. Bharati gives the subject a thorough going over within the compass of his brilliant investigation of tantra as a whole, and, although his approach is avowedly that of the "cultural anthropologist with a strong linguistic predilection,"[7] his diachronic tracings of particular mantras, his categorization of their purposes, etc., are not without relevance to our philosophical concerns, nor are his somewhat optimistic comments on the possible utility of the conceptual tools of analytic philosophy for the furtherance of research in this area. His optimism, however, is not well served by his distorted view of the aims and methods of contemporary philosophy of language, to the extent that his subsequent attempt to define mantra, reflects (and is flawed by) his unconscious adherence to a legacy of overly restrictive philosophical presuppositions. His definition runs as follows:

A *mantra* is a quasi-morpheme or a series of quasi-morphemes, or a series of mixed genuine and quasi-morphemes arranged in conventional patterns, based on codified esoteric traditions, and passed on from one preceptor to one disciple in the course of a prescribed initiation ritual.[8]

Bharati has here given us the mere surface shape and provenance of the utterance *object,* i.e., *what is uttered* in the act of reciting a mantra, rather than attempting to define (as I think Austin and others have very persuasively argued it is *crucial* to define) *the total speech act in the total situation* – viz., the reciting or muttering (Skt. *japa*) as such, paying special attention to the forces which are the invariable concomitants of that *act* of recitation.[9]

Finally, mention must be made of Benjamin Ray's "Performative Utterances in African Rituals,"[10] which accurately records and provides examples for the later Austin's three-aspected analysis of speech acts (see footnote 9), then goes on to apply Austin's notion of illocutionary forces to the ritual language of the Dinka of southern Sudan and the Dogon of central Mali. Despite this auspicious beginning, throughout the body of Ray's study, Ethnology tweaks and turns a waxen-nosed Lady Philosophy where it will, and, under cover of the resultant nimbus of woolliness, relegates all the interesting facets of a given sentence-utterances's illocutionary force to the rather nebulous category of meaning. Now, while meaning as circumscribed by semantic rules (and it is not at all clear whether this is what Ray has in mind) undeniably partially *determines,* it usually *does not exhaust,* an utterance's illocutionary force.[11] What remains falls outside the boundaries of *semantics,* and, in particular, it is part of the business of *pragmatics* to account for the difference between what a sentence means literally and what a speaker means (viz., the illocutionary force inherent) in the uttering of that sentence in a certain context.[12]

II. THE ILLOCUTIONARY ACT(S) OF MANTRA RECITATION

In order to avoid subsequent misunderstanding, it is important at the outset of our analysis to distinguish the recitation of a given mantra in a predelineated context, as the actual performance of an act of a certain kind, from the use of *sandhyābhāṣā* (a special esoteric intentional metalaguage), wherein the performance of that act is merely described.[13] Nor is the illocutionary act of mantra recitation to be identified *tout court* with that of praying, though one can

surely cite specific instances of mantras being made to function as prayer[14] or as a prolegomena to prayer.[15]

Now for the stipulation of a set of conditions, each one of which is necessary and their conjunction sufficient for the successful performance of our chosen paradigm, the sequence of illocutionary acts consisting of two recitations of the mantra F_1 with, in turn, 'contemplative' (R_1) and 'evocative' (R_1') illocutionary force.[16] As a heuristic aid, the conditions are tentatively grouped into different subsets, though there will be minor overlaps.

A. Exordium: Circumstances (C_1 and B_1) and Persons (U_1, H_1 and P_1) Appropriate.[17]

(1) Normal input and output conditions obtain. Here we have in mind the usual *global* presuppositions (C_1) of any kind of serious linguistic communication. Following Searle, who gives an open ended enumeration, these include:

> that the speaker and hearer both know how to speak the language; both are conscious of what they are doing; the speaker is not acting under duress or threats; they have no physical impediments to communication such as deafness, aphasia or laryngitis; they are not acting in a play or telling jokes, etc.[18]

(2) *Special* conditions (B_1), viz., those specifically determinative of the particular ritual context, obtain. These include aptness of time, place, concomitant gestures (mudrās), images, rosaries, maṇḍalas, offerings, etc.[19]

(3) U_1, the utterer(s) (or reciter(s)) of the mantra has (have) proper 'charisma'. This unpacks into a number of indispensable attainments of the following sort on the part of the reciter(s): (a) purgation, (b) proper *moral* basis, (c) requisite practical skill(s), (d) adequate *intellectual* grounding, (e) status of *an initiate* in an esoteric tradition or cult, T_1, etc. The auditor(s) (H_1) must also be of sufficiently advanced spiritual, intellectual, etc. standing; likewise the preceptor (P_1) under whose auspices U_1's initiation into T_1 takes place, and who imparts the mantra to U_1, must be duly qualified and authorized.[20] Failure to comply with any of these preliminary strictures in the performance of the purported speech act, renders it *null.*[21]

B. The *Existence* of an *Accepted* Conventional Procedure.[22]

(1) U_1 has received the formula F_1 from a preceptor P_1 of tradition T_1. (I.e., the sine qua non of the efficacy of any mantra is 'permission of speech',

namely, that the mantra be imparted to the disciple by one who is duly certified to do so and who pays meticulous attention to the minutiae of its proper transmission;[23] the rules (phonological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) of the custodian-donor tradition both *constitute* and *regulate* the structure and the correct and sincere ritual employment of its mantras, by and for that tradition's initiates.)

C. *Correct* and *Complete* Execution of the Procedure.

(1) U_1, uttering F_1 in the presence of H_1, expresses that p_1. Following Searle, we want here to isolate the *propositional content* (p_1), if any, of the speech act explicated.[24] The trouble is that in a good many instances of mantra-utterance, whether or not what is expressed is a proposition is not so easy to ascertain. For one thing, an esoteric tradition's rules pertaining to phonological, syntactic and semantic *formation* and *interrelation*, are at the same time also rules of *encryptation* – at once signal devices for permitting and for obstructing communication, depending on whether one occupies a position inside or outside the tradition.[25] For another, the contextual factors (the 'pragmatics') of the situation have bearing not only on the force with which a proposition is expressed, but, to an extent, on the proposition itself (and the process of exhuming these factors has, in the present case, obviously just begun).

Nonetheless, however, exotic their phonology, syntax and semantics and pragmatics, it is fair to say that for many cultic formulae, the 'propositional content' of what is being uttered is ultimately comprehensible, at least to the adequately prepared devotee. In the case at hand, in uttering F_1, U_1 simultaneously expresses, apprehends and dissolves himself in the pervasive truth of *śūnyatā* (emptiness, voidness).[26] (Granted this 'truth' is, in a strict sense, transpropositional, beyond the reach of language, yet these arcane formulae are especially empowered to approach *śūnyatā* asymptotically as a limit. Thus, in a not unduly attenuated sense, we can say that what T_1's various formulae express, is supposed to have *śūnyatā* as root signification and *true* as its truth value.)[27] As for how what is expressed in uttering F_1 relates to other propositional contents, in particular those of ordinary speech, quite simply, it engulfs them, dissolving them. It is the *aqua regia*, so to speak, of all mundane propositional contents, revealing their merely provisional status for what it is.

It is perhaps more perspicuous to represent symbolically the successive

recitations of F_1 being analyzed as $R_1(p_1)$ and $R_1'(p_1)$, respectively, where R_1 and R_1' are the illocutionary forces alluded to in footnote 16, of this paper, and p_1 is the common propositional content of the sequence of speech acts.[28]

(2) In expressing that p_1, U_1 predicates an instantaneously following state S_1 of U_1. Here the state S_1 is an empowered state. (one which, it goes without saying, the participants do not assume will transpire in any case in the normal course of events.) For, dissolution into the 'womb' of emptiness in the recitation of F_1 (p. 8 above) means U_1's absorption in the unity of this all-pervasive matrix; and, in his understanding of the "Innate Union of appearance and Emptiness" (Beyer, p. 80), U_1 becomes a transformer through which divine power can flow and be recanalized.

(3) U_1's recitations of F_1 prior to $R_1'(p_1)$ number n_1 (n_1 a positive integer). In the Tārā rituals, a devotee must first have acquired power to set about various ritual activities by "having performed the ritual service . . . the requisite number of times and for the requisite length of time." (Kongtrü rinpoch'e as quoted by Beyer on p. 243) 'Effectuation' of the mantra (i.e. 'evocation' of the goddess, in symbols, $R_1'(p_1)$), must be preceded by a ritual service of 100,000 recitations of the mantra during which time contemplation ($R_1(p_1)$) repeatedly takes place. (For further details see Beyer, p. 37.)[29]

(4) Neither $R_1(p_1)$ nor $R_1'(p_1)$ is flawed by the occurrence of any one of T_1's catalog of j_1 'infelicities' or faults (j_1 a positive integer).[30]

D. Participants Sincere

(1) U_1, H_1 and P_1 have not only assimilated and comprehended Buddhist metaphysics (see footnote 20-d) they also *believe* in it. They are subscribers in good standing to the *truth* of the doctrine of emptiness and all that it entails, including the possibility of empowerment (S_1) in the course of dissolution into emptiness.[31]

(2) U_1 *intends* to achieve S_1.

(3) U_1 intends that the n_1 iterated utterances of F_1 will place him in a condition of committed receptivity for S_1 – in other words, that the *japa* or reciting of the mantra again and again will 'turn on' U_1 for the introjection of Tārā's power – and that this accords with the recognized preferences of H_1.[32] This is the *essential* or most salient characteristic of $R_1(p_1)$, the recitation of the mantra with *contemplative* illocutionary force. Quite apart

from the cumbersomeness of the phrase "recitation with contemplative illocutionary force," there is a certain incongruity in the juxtaposition of its last three words. In this case, unlike the case of words well-entrenched in English and geared to the description of speech acts which transpire regularly in Anglo-American culture, there exists no single English explicit performative verb which corresponds exactly to $R_1(p_1)$, the act under explication, and from which we can derive a name for that act's illocutionary force (R_1); nor does $R_1(p_1)$ fit tidily under any one of the subcategories of Austin's preliminary classification of such explicit performatives (Lecture XII of *How to Do Things with Words*). Rather, limiting ourselves for the moment to Austin's scheme, $R_1(p_1)$ would seem to be a composite 'exercitive-commissive' in that it both opens up redirection of the flux of powers and commits the speaker to a certain course of action.[33]

(4) U_1 further intends that the $(n_1 + 1)$st utterance of the mantra will *effectuate* the mantra, i.e., will commit him as transformer to the recanalization of S_1 (already acquired in D-3) beyond and in front of himself, 'in' the heart of the deity, whose ego U_1 has exchanged for his own. This is again, in accordance with the recognized perferences of H_1. And this is the *essential* characteristic of $R_1(p_1)$, the recitation of the mantra with *evocative* (R_1') illocutionary force.[34]

We could here append as a fifth 'D' condition the following: U_1 intends that the utterance of F_1 will produce in H_1 a belief that conditions D-2 to D-4 obtain by means of the recognition of the intention to produce that belief, and he intends this recognition to be achieved by means of the recognition of the mantra as one conventionally used (i.e., within T_1) to produce such beliefs. Aesthetic fastidiousness aside,[35] Searle's reasons for hesitating to confer autonomous status on this condition seem to us irresistibly strong – viz., it is superfluous because implied by A-1 and A-2. listing it outright (as Searle nevertheless does) only serves to underscore the pivotal role of recognized intention in uttering something and meaning it.

Subject, then, to certain refinements and qualifications (to be discussed immediately below), we terminate our list of conditions with the following *Cover-all* Condition: Given that U_1 utters a formula F_1 in the presence of auditors H_1, then U_1 sincerely and correctly performs the sequence of illocutionary acts $R_1(p_1)$ and $R_1'(p_1)$ if and only if conditions A through D obtain.

Next following Montague,[36] we might go on to specify that the 'point of reference' in the case undergoing explication is a 13-tuple, consisting of the following 13 *relevant* parameters: $U_1, H_1, P_1, T_1, F_1, C_1, B_1, R_1, R_1'$, p_1, S_1, n_1 and j_1. Exercising parsimony one could doubtless weed out certain redundancies, but then our formulation makes no claim to elegance or finality. Its forte, if any, is rather like that of a good decongestant; the passageway to a more general theory is hopefully a little less clogged as a consequence of this precursory exploration of a special case.

A comment before taking up the subject of the *perlocutionary* effects of $R_1(p_1)$ and $R_1'(p_1)$ and generalizing therefrom. Though a detailed examination of the loudness, stress-patterns, intonation, tone, etc. of our analysandum is beyond this paper's scope[37], these factors – of paramount importance in determining both the import and the impact of a mantra as uttered – have been the subject of painstaking investigation and lively debate ever since Vedic times; (and, in view of the widespread conviction that a mantra is the sonic reverberation of divine power,[38] it is hardly surprising that quality control of its components cannot be left to the caprices of the individual reciter.) Keeping this in mind, we turn again to the 'japping' or 'reciting' of the mantra, this time, for the sake of greater accuracy with respect to the parameter of *loudness*. The decibel range over which the recitation can vary is enormous: all the way from total inaudibility or subvocal rumination upwards to corporate (and sometimes cacophonous) din, the mantra's potency or spiritual value being, as a general rule, inversely proportional to the magnitude of its decibel rating. Often enough the actual verbal recitations of a ritual are preceded by silent visualizations in tandem with special patterns of breathing; these are no less recitations (and indeed are so regarded by the devotees). In still other situations, the mantra is repeatedly and monotonously 'japped' *spontaneously* (i.e., in complete divorcement from ritual context),[39] and this activity may be voiceless or not. It seems to me, however, that none of the foregoing serves to cast dubiety on the status of $R_1(p_1)$, $R'(p_1)$ and their congeners, which, subvocal or not, are unquestionably bona fide speech acts.

III. PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECTS OF MANTRA RECITATION

We close with a few words on the fruits or issue of a successful recitation, a matter which bears directly on our central topic. In contradistinction to the

illocutionary act or act performed *in* saying something, "the *perlocutionary* act is the achieving of certain effects *by* saying something." (I.e., once the illocutionary act has taken effect, various aims and purposes, and perhaps other *unintended* consequences, may be brought about or occur.)[40] In the case of mantra recitation, even were we to limit ourselves to a consideration of the possible consequential effects of $R_1(p_1)$ and $R_1'(p_1)$ alone, a catalog of these approaching completeness, would cause Leporello himself to falter. For U_1, having exchanged his own ego for that of the deity "*is* the deity, and gains thereby godlike magical attainments to understand and control reality,"[41] and the answer to the question, 'What does the yogin do with his divinity?' is simply this: "he does anything he wishes. He may control the events of public nonreality with the power of the mantra, or as a Buddha he may immerse himself in a Buddha's Emptiness, controlling his own apprehension through the simulacrum of his divine body."[42]

Attempts to impose an ordering on these myriad possibilities have themselves been varied and numerous. In Beyer's typology (p. 236), data is distributed among four categories: general, soteriological, ritual and magical, provision being made for the attachment of any one of a number of different appendices to a basic mantra, depending on the particular use to which the practitioner may wish to put its recitation. (See Beyer, p. 208) Gonda, on p. 265, alludes to B. K. Majumdar's list of "no less than sixteen different functions" of mantra recitation, ranging from the realization of final emancipation, to communication with the gods, to the exorcism of demons,to the destruction of living beings, etc. Again, " 'What is there that cannot be accomplished by *mantras* if they are applied in accordance with the rules?' One can even gain Buddhahood."[43] Indeed on an antinomian plateau, surpassing both all wish for an illusion of either power or acquisition, the wise man passes "beyond oblations, renunciation and austerities, and is freed from *mantra* and meditation."[44] Thus the fifty-two letters yield a harvest rich beyond measure and beyond richness, the harvest of emptiness.

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NOTES

[1] *Pragmatics of Natural Languages*, ed. by Y. Bar-Hillel, Reidel, Dordrecht, 1971, contains eleven essays written under the aegis of the symposium.

[2] R. C. Stalnaker, 'Pragmatics', p. 383, in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. by D. Davidson and G. Harman, Reidel. Dordrecht, 1972, pp. 380–397. Though a unified, formal treatment of the subject was not achieved until 1965, as a result of the efforts of Montague and Howard (see R. Montague 'Pragmatics', in *Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. by R. Klibansky, Florence, 1968 and 'Pragmatics and Intensional Logic', in *Semantics of Natural* Languages, pp. 142–168), concern about the pragmatic aspects of languages is certainly not a new phenomenon. Earlier theorists evincing such concern include figures as diverse as Pātañjali, (*arthāt prakaraṇād vā loke dvayor ekasyābhinivṛttiḥ, Mahābhāṣya* VI, 1, 84) and the Latin grammarian Varro. (See R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Medieval Grammatical Theory in Europe*, Kennikat Press, New York, 1951, pp. 52–54) There are even intimations of what we are after in Roger Bacon. (See L. M. de Rijk, *Logica Modernorum* II, the Netherlands, 1967, pp. 124–25.) More recent prolepses include C. S. Peirce's 'speculative rhetoric' (See, e.g. J. K. Feibleman's *An Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy*, Hauser Press,New Orleans, 1946, pp. 129–34), E. Husserl's theory of 'occasional expressions' (*Logische Untersuchungen* II, Halle, 1928, 79–90) and, perhaps most germane to our present interests, Austin's spadework on speech acts (see footnote 4).

[3] *The Cult of Tārā*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973.

[4] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (ed. by J. O. Urmson), Oxford Press, 1965. J. Searle, 'Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts', *Philosophical Review*, 1968, pp. 405–424 J. Searle, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge, 1969, and J. Searle (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*, Oxford Press, 1971. Following Austin, but with some modifications due to Searle (see footnote 9), an 'illocutionary act' is an act one performs *in* saying something. I.e., over and above expressing a certain propositional content, *in* speaking one can perform the acts of, e.g., promising, warnings, etc.)

[5] See Beyer, pp. 144–145. Emmet says (on p. 200 of her *Function, Purpose and Powers*, Macmillan, 1972): "Symbols which grow out of religious experiences both indicate and instigate a *process* already going on which we very imperfectly understand." Again, on p. 214 of the same work, she remarks: "Similarly certain words may not just signify blessing, but their pronouncement is itself blessing. Here it is tempting to use the term current in contemporary philosophy – 'performatory' utterance." The discussion which follows, based as it is on a distinction Austin initially drew between 'performatory' utterances (or utterances in which saying is *ipso facto* doing) and 'constative' utterances (utterances which are mere statings), is too simplistic to be really useful. For, as Austin's own efforts to ramify and refine his earlier speculations soon disclosed, the supposedly special case of the performative utterance, in fact comprehends the constative species of utterance as well – an insight which caused Austin to redirect his energies to the construction of a general doctrine of speech acts.

[6] J. Gonda, The Indian Mantra', *Oriens*, 1963, pp. 244–297.

[7] *The Tantric Tradition*, Rider and Company, London, 1965, p. 11. Bharati is, of course, far more than a mere sympathetic onlooker. As an initiate in a Hindu tantric sect, he has privileged access to certain materials and this imbues his descriptions with an authoritativeness not to be found in those of most of his fellow scholars.

[8] *The Tantric Tradition*, p. 111. D. Snellgroves' definition (p. 136 *Hevajra Tantra* Part I, London, 1959) is similar.

[9] More precisely, Austin distinguishes a group of things we do in saying something: "We perform a *locutionary act*... which is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense. Second,we said that we also perform illocutionary acts such as informing, ordering,

warning, undertaking, etc., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform *perlocutionary* acts: what we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring. . . ." (*How to Do Things with Words*, p. 108) Austin further trifurcates a locutionary act into (a) a *phonetic act* or act of uttering certain noises, (b) a *phatic act* or act of uttering certain vocables or words, (c) a *rhetic act* or act of using those words with a more or less definite sense and reference. Searle (in his 'Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary acts', p. 420) gives cogent reasons for replacing Austin's 'locutionary-illocutionary' distinction by one between "(1) the content, or as some philosophers call it, the proposition in an illocutionary act, and (2) the force, or illocutionary type of the act." Hence, while Bharati's definition was limited to the origins of (1) and the form of its phatic aspect, in this paper, following Searle, we shall also be concerned with (1) *qua content* and with (2) as well.

[10] *History of Religions*, August, 1973, pp. 16–35.

[11] As our detailed scrutiny of the illocutionary act(s) of mantra recitation below will illustrate. See also Barry Richards, who in a tightly articulared paper on the relation between meaning and speech acts ('Searle on Meaning and Speech Acts', *Foundations of Language*, 1971, pp. 519–538), avers (on p. 532): "We have argued above assuming that every sentence contains at least one illocutionary-act device, that for any sentence the meaning of the utterance of the sentence under certain appropriate conditions is at least partially determined by the semantical rules which attach to the illocutionary act device(s) in the sentence." But the upshot of what Richards goes on to prove is that "for all but perhaps an indefinitely small number of sentences, the semantic component does not specify all the conditions necessary for their appropriate utterance" (p. 538).

[12] Here a rider harkening back to the caveat implicit in our opening paragraph is in order. We concede that there is sometimes great difficulty in delineating the proper domains of semantics and pragmatics. (Cf., *inter alia* Stalnaker, 'Pragmatics', p. 387) Our disgruntlement with Mr. Ray stems from the fact that he is not yet aware of the need for (indeed the *possibility of*) drawing such a distinction.

[13] In other words, the first is an act of e.g., evocation, while the second is an act of description. Bharati succinctly captures the thrust of this distinction on p. 165 of *The Tantric Tradition*, noting that even Indian pandits very often equate the one with the other.

[14] See, for example, Gonda's 'The Indian Mantra', pp. 284 ff.

[15] Beyer, on page 194 of *The Cult of Tārā*, mentions the recitation of the 100-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva as a device whereby the monks who employ it "are themselves purified, the preceding ritual is made firm, and their speech is empowered for the prayer that follows." A more apt comparison, if made with due circumspection, is that between mantra recitation and 'mystical orison' in the sense in which Evelyn Underhill uses the term in *Mysticism*, Dutton & Co., New York, 1961.

[16] R_1 and R'_1 are the *principal* illocutionary forces, the ones which 'wear the trousers', in the example we have chosen to follow through; there are undoubtedly ancillary forces at work as well, but those are beyond the scope of the present investigation. Note that instead of attempting the impossible task of specifying a given context of utterance or recitation in its full complexity, we might, in a more formal treatment, adopt Montague's device ('Pragmatics', p. 104), employing an index or point of reference, *i*, which consists of an *n*-tuple comprising the complex of the *n relevant* aspects of a given context of use. We could then circumscribe our particular context (viz., the ritual context proper

to the contemplation and evocation of Tārā), setting $i = 1$. The point of reference could later be made to vary over all permissible values in its domain, thereby determining, in turn, each of a number of alternative contexts.

[17] Though from the vantage point of the uninitiated observer the ritual under investigation is indeed correctly describable as involving a reciter (U_1), his auditors (H_1) and his preceptor (P_1), from the participants' point of view, the goddess Tārā is the addressee and, as phenomenal distinctions blur and then dissolve entirely under the growing penumbra of *śūnyatā* or emptiness (see footnote 20-d), no personalities, not even that of Tārā herself, ultimately remain as designata for our symbols. We are left instead with what Emmet (in her *Function, Purpose and Powers*) refers to as 'personae', or functional relationships between stereotyped roles. Note that, in any case, H_1 and P_1 are not mutually exclusive designations.

[18] J. Searle, *The Philosophy of Language*, p. 48. Communication is Searle's word. A better choice might perhaps be communion-cum-communication or some such hybrid, since communication is only a part of what transpires (and that rather early) in the speech act under investigation. Beter still would be to avoid altogether the constraints and confusions that arise from the premature affixing of a label, and allow the analysis that follows to reveal the lineaments of the act piecemeal.

[19] Beyer's discussion supplies concrete details peculiar to the 'Four Maṇḍala' ritual for Tārā (which, as a ritual of 'offering', has as its base the 'contemplation' and 'evocation' we are concerned to explicate. Cf. Beyer, p. 67. This terminology will be further clarified in the course of our analysis below.) "If this ritual is being performed for the purpose of accumulating merit, it should be performed especially at the time of the full moon, the new moon, the eighth day, and so on . . . The ritual is even more meritorious if performed on one of the great yearly festivals . . . The ritual should be performed in a temple or any clean and pleasing place . . . It is most beneficial if the ritual is performed in the special places where ḍākas and ḍākiṇīs dwell in person . . ." (*The Cult of Tārā*, pp. 173–74). We are presented with rather different sets of alternatives on pp. 142–45 of Bharati's *The Tantric Tradition.* Indeed, these parameters, depending as they do on the cult from which their stipulation derives, admit of almost limitless variability.

[20] Here, again, for the sake of uniformity, our documentation is culled primarily from Beyer. As for (a), citing Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan, Beyer says on p. 173: "Before performing this ritual, if possible, the practitioners should bathe themselves and cleanse the place and equipment; if they are unable to do so, the ritual should at least be performed in the morning before any of them has eaten meat or drunk beer." This leitmotif of physical purgation runs throughout yogic practices in general. (See, e.g., M. Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton/Bollingen paperback, 1970, pp. 230–31.) As for (b), the inculcation of (here) Buddhist ethical attitudes is aimed at – psychological purification or 'purification in the path'. (See especially Beyer, pp. 27–33.) Mutatis mutandis for recitations in Jain and Hindu contexts. Part II, Chapter III of Underhill's *Mysticism* contains an abundance of analogous material from Western mystical texts. Here what is perhaps most striking is the similarity in even the choice of symbolism – e.g., defilements to be excised represented as the black head of a raven on the one hand (Underhill, p. 147) and as a black phantom on the other (Bharati, p. 113). Under the rubric of (c) the desiderata include psychological preparation in the form of sufficient practice in solitary contemplation and the achievement of proficiency in visualization (Beyer, pp. 25–27 and 68–75). (d) demands

U_1's comprehension of the received (in this case T_1's) version of the Buddhist metaphysics of *śūnyatā* or emptiness, together with all that this metaphysical stance entails (Beyer, pp. 33–36 and 81–108). (e) is self-explanatory, but often insufficiently stressed. Hence, even before the ritual service [the contemplation of the mantra] the young monk must have received the proper initiatory authorization for each deity. (Beyer, p. 38.) The credentials of the auditors and preceptor must also obviously include initiation, along with unbroken vows and contemplation in prior ritual service of the goddess, (Beyer, p. 67.)

[21] In cases of this sort, the purported act is voided – it *misfires.* Austin's doctrine of the things that can go wrong on the occasion of such utterances (i.e., his so-called 'doctrine of infelicities' distinguishes 'misfires' (or violations of conditions listed in groups A through C) from 'abuses' (violations of conditions listed under D-1 through 4). In the latter situations, unlike the former, the act *is achieved,* not botched, albeit it is rendered hollow for any one of a number of specific reasons. See pp. 290 – 291. See also Austin, pp. 14–24 of *How To Do Things with Words.*

[22] A procedure "having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances." (Austin, *How to Do Things with Words,* p. 14)

[23] More concisely put, a mantra must be *guruvaktrataḥ.* See Bharati, p. 107 and Beyer, pp. 36–38, pp. 399–403 andp. 424. To adapt a well-known dictum, while we do *not* go to grammarian for words, we do and must go to a guru for mantras.

[24] A separate, extended study of these putative propositions and their truth conditions ought to be undertaken; but since our present inquiry is primarily pragmatic, rather than semantic, a few remarks will have to suffice. Note that *not all* illocutionary acts *need have* propositional content. (See, for example, Searle, *The Philosophy of Language,* p. 43).

[25] I.e., a mantra may express a perfectly clear exoterical sense, "but from the esoterical point of view this sense is not necessarily connected with the true value, though it may have a mnemonic value" (Gonda, 'The Indian Mantra', p. 272). Beyer has some interesting things to say in this regard on p. 145 of his *The Cult of Tārā.* He lists functional differences among several types of formula structure: (a) some are injunctive; (b) others are particles functioning morphemically in the utterance and/or serving as seeds for contemplation; (c) still others are stereotyped doctrinal formulae with special ritual uses, "sometimes totally dissociated from their meaning." R. Ekvall, in his discussion of a single mantra on pp. 116–117 of his *Religious Observances in Tibet* (Chicago, 1964) dismisses questions of meaning as "of secondary importance." Vasubandhu, tersely paradoxical, writes on pp. 272 ff. of his *Bodhisattvabhūmi* "that the true meaning of the mantras lay in their absence of meaning" (quoted by Eliade on p. 216 of his *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*). Still more extreme are the views of one Kautsa, in whose opinion the Vedic mantras, though admittedly effective, were meaningless. J. F. Staal notes on p. 472 of his 'Sanskrit Philosophy of Language' (*Current Trends in Linguistics,* 5, 1969, pp. 463–495) that "the extreme form in which this thesis was defended scandalized Vedic orthodoxy." Finally Bharati, in demonstrating on pp. 114–117 (*The Tantric Tradition*) that much of mantric material has been too hastily relegated to the dustbin of 'gibberish', (for instance, '*bīja*' mantras-particles whose meaning would at first glance seem to be no more than their function) underscores the need for caution in making assessments in this area. Hence, setting aside extreme cases (e.g., *dhāraṇīs* or

stereotyped formulae which are clearly *not* independent power vehicles, nor are they properly meaningful – they merely serve to buttress meditation), there still remains a whole spectrum of mantras which derive their varying degrees of significance from specific doctrines and are regarded in their respective utterances as partially expressive of some (usually transcendent) truth.

[26] About which, as is well known, volumes have been written, despite its alleged unamenability to formulation in discursive language. See (d) of footnote 20. See also Beyer, passim. Note that whatever else propositional content may amount to in the speech acts here being analyzed, I certainly do not regard it as necessarily entailing that either the utterer's or the auditor's psyche be attended by imagery of certain kind. Nor does it hinge on the presence or absence of a reified significatum. What, then, does propositional content amount to? The fact is that, short of a full formalization of the semantics of *any natural* language – not forthcoming in the near future – we cannot answer this question with exactitude and in a manner to which all philosopher-linguists would assent, even for a *pedestrian* variety of speech act. And, short of the sallying forth of a Kripke or Montague into Tantric territory, we are not likely to have a precise and exhaustive delineation of the semantics of any particular *cultic* language. However, things are not entirely hopeless. There are relevant discussions. Those of Tsong-kha-pa (*Snags-rim chen-po*, P. 6210, Vol. 161, 193.5.2–194.3.2 in *Collected Works* Wa 129a-130b) and of Lama Govinda (cf. his entire book *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, Dutton, New York, 1960) come immediately to mind.

What emerges is that the peak experiences here under consideration have a specifically Buddhist coloration – this in contradistinction to the content of similar experiences which occur in e.g., Hindu or Jain settings – and that this characteristic coloring is due to the *significiance* of the formulae which the cultists employ along the way to the realization of the ultimate truth of cessation. Up to the point where a successful recitation takes effect – whereupon *all* distinctions, including that of isolable propositional content, go by the board and *śūnyatā* holds sway – this peculiarly Buddhist content constitutes a difference which makes a difference to the nature of the experience. It can be meditated upon, cognized, regarded as true or false, etc. Beyond that point, where semantics becomes otiose, so also does pragmatics (in the sense which is the focus of this paper), but then so does the whole of epistemology. All mundance expedients are then clearly seen as such and become so much grist for the radical 'pragmatics' of the mill of *nirvāṇa* attainment.

[27] In other words, they are so many samsaric devices for diversely expressing a series of propositions converging on the inexpressible *śūnyatā*.

[28] Searle says essentially the same thing on 420–21 of his 'Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts', except that he there suggests, *incorrectly*, that a "sentence [be represented] as containing an illocutionary force-indicating device and a propositional content indicator. Thus: $F(p)$ where the range of possible values for F will determine the range of illocutionary forces, and the p is a variable over the infinite range of possible propositions." What Searle ought to have said is that the *sentence as uttered in a certain context*, viz., the speech act, be so represented. Similarly G. Lakoff represents the 'underlying structure' of a sentence (sic) in this fashion in Section VI of his 'Linguistics and Natural Logic', *Synthese* 22, 1970, pp. 151–271. On this level he employs an explicit performative verb to represent each illocutionary force, as for example, the performatives 'order', 'ask', etc.

[29] And in the Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā faith, to give another example, "the more a worshipper

advances in his *japa* (reciting) the more does he partake of the nature of the deity and the sooner will he effect his salvation. In the practice of praising the gods the number of mantras is therefore an instrument of power. The effect is assured only if the number is complete . . . A mantra which under ordinary circumstances is to be read 108 times, must be recited 1008 times if there are difficulties to be overcome." (Gonda, 'The Indian Mantra', p. 271).

[30] Cf., footnote 21. See also Beyer, p. 245. "One must avoid the 'ten faults' in the recitation of the mantra', consisting of five faults and five 'interruptions'. The faults are to recite too loudly, too softly, too quickly, or too slowly, or to mumble indistinctly. The interruptions are to cough, to sneeze, to stumble, to fall asleep, or to have one's mind wander from the recitation . . .. Moreover, the following numbers of recitations must be subtracted from the total number: for falling asleep, fifteen; for sneezing, ten; for breaking wind, seven; for stumbling, five, etc." It goes without saying that *completeness and correctness* are not independent of one another. Note too that, short of being arbitrary, one cannot always draw a sharp line between 'external' or manifest flaws in a performance (violations of C conditions) and inappropriate 'internal' or dispositional accompaniments (cf., D conditions below), though by and large it is useful to attempt to do so. Thus, since our schematism is a helpful heuristic rather than a procrustean bed, we have ventured to place eg., 'falling asleep' and 'having one's mind wander' under C-4.

[31] Generalizing, this condition has to do with the participants' *beliefs,* with what is *presupposed* in the *pragmatic,* rather than in the *semantic* sense of the term 'presupposition'. Stalnaker expresses the difference clearly on p. 387 of 'Pragmatics': "According to the *semantic* concept, a proposition *P* presupposes a proposition *Q* if and only if *Q* is necessitated both by *P* and by not-*P*. That is, in every model in which P is either true or false, *Q* is true. According to the *pragmatic* conception, presupposition is a propositional attitude, not a semantic relation. People, rather than sentences or propositions, are said to have, or make, presuppositions in this sense . . . . To presuppose a proposition in the pragmatic sense is to take its truth for granted, and to assume that others involved in the context do the same."

[32] See Beyer, pp. 37, 67 and 255–57. Re "the recognized preferences of H_1," the auditors, as we have noted in A-1′ above are aware of what, in general, it is for any speaker 'seriously' to utter any sentence. Moreover, as initiated confreres of U_1's in T_1 (or as Tārā herself, if one numbers the goddess among the auditors or indeed regards her as the prime addressee), the auditors share U_1's awareness of the 'felicity' conditions peculiar to proper performance of $R_1(p_1)$ and $R_1'(p_1)$. See footnote 20-e above and the "permission of speech" restriction, B-1, on p. 7. Here, in addition to their *comprehension* of all these conditions, we make explicit the requirement that the auditors' (other than purely *cognitive*) immediate dispositions vis-à-vis the ritual performance be appropriate. Tārā, of course, 'has preferences' only in an 'analogous' sense of the term, as a Thomist might put it.

[33] The same sort of considerations obviously also apply to $R_1'(p_1)$ below. However, it is important to emphasize that Austin's scheme – indeed any taxonomy narrowly based on the exigencies of a *single* natural language – stands in need of revision and expansion. If, in the manner of Searle (p. 417 of 'Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts'), we think of illocutionary forces as arrayed on a continuum – we get a hopelessly warped picture of the relative density of and interrelatedness among constellations of such forces within an array which does little more than reflect the idiosyncracies of English.

Obviously a viable scheme ought to have as its basis a cross-cultural (better, a 'trans-familial') compilation of linguistic data.

[34] The order of precedence of D-3 and D-4 is invariant. The illocutionary act R_1 (p_1) is ancillary to the act R'_1 (p_1) – one must first *contemplate* the mantra and in so doing become the goddess, as it were, speaking with her very voice, before one can *evoke* her. Here the terms 'contemplate' and 'evoke' have the special technical senses which emerge from the explication above. They are also contrasted *graphically* with one another by Beyer, the lead column of his chart on p. 257 listing the 'locus of power' as *within* the practitioner in the former case (cf., our description above of the 'introjection' of S_1) and in front of him in the latter (cf., our 'recanalization of S_1 beyond and in front of' U_1). (See also Beyer, p. 67 and p. 243.)

[35] And Searle, from whom we have taken the formula almost verbatim is surely not to blame for its ungainliness, which is a function of the complexity of the interrelations referred to therein.

[36] See footnote 16.

[37] And our competence. The existence or rules in T_1 explicitly concerned with these matters is alluded to in B-1.

[38] Though this is the received view of Buddhists, Jains and Hindus alike (see, e.g., Beyer p. 64 and Gonda, pp. 248–49 and pp. 275–76) Buddhists, in fact, frequently give pride of place to the visual rather than the sonic dimensions of an experience.

[39] Bharati, pp. 121–22

[40] See Austin, *How to Do Things with Words,* p. 120. See also Lecture IX of the same work and footnote 9 of this paper. Our two summary sentences make no mention of the difficulties with which Austin wrestled in trying to distinguish, in a concrete situation, the taking effect of an illocutionary act from the consequences produced by the successful performance of that act. While this is a relatively easy matter in the case of an act such as promising, it is rather more difficult (and perhaps not always possible) to demarcate with precision the illocutionary form the perlocutionary aspects of a randomly chosen instance of mantra recitation. Small wonder, then, that words relating to the production (intentional or otherwise) of effects, e.g., 'purpose' and 'function' are used indiscriminately by most ethmologists and Buddhist scholars to refer to both the illocutionary and the perlocutionary dimensions of a speech act. Though we cannot, given the limitations of this paper, afford to lift the lid of this Pandora's box of problems and argue at length for the validity of such a distinction, we hope to do so in a subsequent study. For now the pragmatic value of having the distinction (however rough-hewn) at hand as an analytic implement, will simply have to speak for itself.

[41] Beyer, p. 68.

[42] Beyer, p. 130.

[43] Quoted from the *Sādhanamālā* by Eliade, p. 214 of *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom.*

[44] Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra,* part I, p. 65.

THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF RITUAL

FRITS STAAL

svarge'pi pipīlikāḥ santi
"even in heaven there are ants"
Sanskrit Proverb

The Agnicayana, a 3000-year-old Vedic ritual, was performed in 1975 in a village in southwest India by Nambudiri brahmins. This event, which lasted twelve days, was filmed, photographed, recorded and extensively documented. From twenty hours of rough footage, Robert Gardner and I produced a 45-minute film, "Altar of Fire." Two records are planned with selections from the eighty hours of recorded recitation and chant. Photographs of the ceremonies were taken by Adelaide de Menil. In collaboration with the chief Nambudiri ritualists and other scholars, I am preparing a definite account of the ceremonies, which will appear in two illustrated volumes entitled: "Agni — The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar."

I shall here be concerned not with empirical description, but with theoretical implications. Vedic ritual is not only the oldest surviving ritual of mankind; it also provides the best source material for a theory of ritual. This is not because it is close to any alleged "original" ritual. Vedic ritual is not primitive and not an *Ur*-ritual. It is sophisticated and already the product of a long development. But it is the largest, most elaborate and (on account of the Sanskrit manuals) best documented among the rituals of man. Hubert and Mauss, who noted these facts in 1909, used the Vedic animal sacrifice as source material for the construction of a ritual paradigm ("un schème abstrait du sacrifice").[1] However, they did not know that these rituals are still performed, so that many data were inaccessible to them. I shall use data from the 1975 performance and textual material from Sanskrit manuals, in particular the *śrauta sūtras*, a literature exclusively devoted to ritual which dates from the eighth through fourth centuries B.C.

[1] H. Hubert and M. Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice," *Mélanges d'histoire et des religions*, 1909, page 22.

I

A widespread but erroneous assumption about ritual is that it consists in symbolic activities which refer to something else. It is characteristic of a ritual performance, however, that it is self-contained and self-absorbed. The performers are totally immersed in the proper execution of their complex tasks. Isolated in their sacred enclosure, they concentrate on correctness of act, recitation and chant. Their primary concern, if not obsession, is with rules. There are no symbolic meanings going through their minds when they are engaged in performing ritual.

Such absorption, by itself, does not show that ritual cannot have a symbolic meaning. However, also when we ask a brahmin explicitly why the rituals are performed, we never receive an answer which refers to symbolic activity. There are numerous different answers, such as: we do it because our ancestors did it; because we are eligible to do it; because it is good for society; because it is good; because it is our duty; because it is said to lead to immortality; because it leads to immortality. A visitor will furthermore observe that a person who has performed a Vedic ritual acquires social and religious status, which involves other benefits, some of them economic. Beyond such generalities one gets involved in individual case histories. Some boys have never been given much of a choice, and have been taught recitations and rites as a matter of fact; by the time they have mastered these, there is little else they are competent or motivated to do. Others are inspired by a spirit of competition. The majority would not be able to come up with an adequate answer to the question why they engage in ritual. But neither would I, if someone were to ask me why I am writing about it.

Why ask such personal questions? It might be more proper and fruitful to ask specific questions about the meaning of particular rites. Some such questions do receive specific answers, on which participants and scholars generally agree. The Yajamāna, or Patron of the ritual, must keep his hands closed "like a child in the womb of its mother, ready to be reborn." The fire altar has the shape of a bird because fire, as well as Soma, were fetched from heaven by a bird. The priests do not go south if they can help it for the southern direction is inauspicious. Certain bricks of the altar are consecrated so that it may rain.

Such simple answers form a small minority. They are given rarely, and only in reply to similarly simple questions. Most questions concerning ritual detail involve numerous complex rules, and no participant could provide an answer or elucidation with which he would himself be satisfied. Outsiders and bystanders may volunteer their ideas about religion and philosophy generally — without reference to any specific question. In most cases such people are Hindus who do not know anything about Vedic ritual. There is only one answer which the best and most reliable among the ritualists themselves give consistently and with more than average frequency: we act according to the rules because this is our tradition (*parampara*). The effective part of the answer seems to be: look and listen, these are our activities! To performing ritualists, rituals are to a large extent like dance, of which Isadora Duncan said: "If I could tell you what it meant there would be no point in dancing it."

Ritual, then, is primarily activity. It is an activity governed by explicit rules. The important thing is what you do, not what you think, believe or say. In India this has become a basic feature of all religion, so that we should refer, not to the faithful or orthodox, but to the orthoprax (from Greek *orthos,* "right" and *praxis,* "action"). It is precisely this feature which is least understood by English-writing Indian authors such as V. S. Naipaul and N. C. Chaudhuri, who have recently taken on the role of explaining India to Western intelligentsia.

II

If we wish to know the meaning or theory of ritual, we should not confine ourselves to practising ritualists; we have learned, after all, that it does not pay to ask elephants about zoology, or artists about the theory of art. Before asking anyone else, however, let us take a look at what the Indian tradition itself has to offer. Since in India ritual has always been a favorite topic for speculation, there is an abundance of material. Even prior to speculation we find suggestive ideas. In the earliest Vedic literature, rituals, along with metres and chants, are used by gods and demons to fight and conquer each other, and sometimes to create worlds. Even when the aims are not explicit, gods and demons are frequently depicted as engaged in ritual. Commentaries provide rituals with a great variety of interpretations, sometimes inconsistent with each other.

In due course specific rites came to be prescribed to fulfil specific desires: for health, power, offspring, victory, heaven, and the like. The list of wishes and desires is not so very different from that of modern man. It is certainly not exclusively spiritual, as some modern visionaries have claimed. But this trend receded again into the background. With increasing systematization of the ritual, we witness a codification of two kinds of rites: the *gṛhya* or domestic rites, which are "rites de passage," life-cycle rites or sacraments, accompanying such events as birth, initiation, marriage and death; and the *śrauta* rites, "rites solennels," or traditional rites. There are several general and formal differences between these two kinds of ritual. For example, the traditional rites require three fire altars and the services of several priests, whereas the domestic rites require only one fire (the domestic fire) and one priest (the domestic priest). While the function of the domestic rites appears to be fairly straightforward, the significance of the traditional rites is not obvious. The traditional ritual, with its myriad ramifications, exhibits the unhampered development of ritual construction and creativity. It is therefore more important for the understanding of ritual than the domestic rites. The latter, by themselves, might seem to be amenable to explanations along the lines of, e.g., Van Gennep's *Rites de passage* (1909). But since such explanations are clearly inapplicable to the traditonal rites, and domestic and traditional rites are partly similar in structure, it follows that all such theories are inappropriate. There are, moreover, traditional rituals which last a thousand years, which shows that some of the rites were purely theoretical. Such theoretical constructs (which the grammarian Patañjali compared to the infinite uses of language) should not be brushed aside, as was done by Hillebrandt, who referred in this connection, to "myth and fantasy" of the ritualists.[2] On the contrary, they are as important for the theory of ritual as are concrete ceremonies. Many rites have in fact an intermediate status. The Agnicayana, which was performed in 1975, is a traditional ritual which seems to have been always "real", though some of its extensions, which the texts describe, smack of theory.

The *śrauta sūtras* of the late Vedic period offer several definitions of ritual. One which is often quoted characterizes it as comprising

[2] A. Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur, Vedische Opfer und Zauber,* Strassburg 1897, page 158.

three things: *dravya,* "the substance (which is used in oblations)"; *devatā,* "the deity (to which oblations are offered)"; and *tyāgā,* "renunciation (of the fruits of the ritual acts)". The *tyāgā* is a formula pronounced by the Patron at the culmination of each act of oblation. When the officiating priest, on behalf of the Patron, makes the oblation into the fire for one of the gods, for example Agni, the Patron says:

> "this is for Agni, not for me" (*agnaye idaṃ na mama*).

At this point a contradiction begins to appear, which becomes increasingly explicit in the ritualistic philosophy of the Mīmāṃsā. The reason for performing a specific ritual is stated to be the desire for a particular fruit or effect. The stock example of the Mīmāṃsā is:

> "he who desires heaven shall sacrifice with the Agniṣṭoma ritual" (*agniṣṭomena svargakāmo yajeta*).

But this fruit is renounced whenever the Patron utters his *tyāga* formula of renunciation. The effect, therefore, is not obtained.

The resulting picture is further complicated by another apparent contradiction. The rites are subdivided into two classes: "obligatory," (*nitya*) and "optional" (*kāmya*). Unlike the Agnicayana, which is *kāmya,* the Agniṣṭoma is a *nitya* rite: every brahman has the duty to perform it. So here is a ritual which appears to be optional, since it is confined to those who desire heaven (nobody's duty); but which is also not optional, because it is a prescribed duty; and which moreover in the final resort does not bear any fruit because its fruits are abandoned. The texts reflect such contradictions. The Mīmāṃsā Sūtra, basic manual of the Mīmāṃsā, lays down that the rites lead to happiness, but the subcommentary "Straight Spotless" (*Ṛjuvimalā*) observes that this does not apply to obligatory acts.

The Mīmāṃsā philosophers faced another difficulty. When a ritual performance is completed, no fruit is seen. The Yajamāna, on whose behalf the rites have been performed, does not raise up and go to heaven. Rather the opposite: he returns home and is, as the texts put it, the same as he was before. In particular, he must continue to perform the morning and evening fire rites (*agnihotra*) for the rest of his life. The Mīmāṃsā concluded, quite logically, that the fruit of ritual activity is — temporarily — unseen. It will become apparent only later, e.g., after death. An elaborate theory was devised to show

that this is in accordance with the mechanism of *karman*, according to which every cause has an effect. A special logical theorem, called *arthāpatti*, was invented in support of this theory. The followers of the Mīmāṃsā were criticized by others (e.g., the philosophers of the Advaita Vedānta) for postulating such unseen effects. For whatever our contemporary fads may suggest — in India, the unseen is resorted to only under duress. What the Mīmāṃsā in fact ended up teaching is that the rituals have to be performed for their own sake.

The notion of *tyāga*, "renunciation," has attained an important position in Hinduism through the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa advocates as the highest goal of life a mode of activity, in which acts are performed as usual, but the fruit (*phala*) of action (*karman*) is always renounced (*karma-phala-tyāga*).

III

The Indian tradition offers suggestive speculations but is does not seem to come up with a single consistent theory of ritual. The most interesting Indian contribution is perhaps the term *karman* itself: originally and primarily used for ritual and similarly pure or ideal activity, it comes by extension to denote any kind of human activity. Now let us see what modern scholars have to offer. For a long time it has been fashionable to believe that rites re-enact myths. This idea was partly inspired by the Babylonian festival of the New Year, which involves a recital of the myth of creation. But this hypothesis is difficult to support and creates an unsolved problem: why should anybody wish to re-enact a myth? The same difficulty applies to several more recent theories, according to which ritual reflects social structure. It is true, again, that there are some remarkable parallels which require explanation. But the question remains: why should social structures be represented or enacted ritually, and in a very roundabout manner at that? Such unanswered questions, generated by the theory, suggest that theories of this type are best abandoned.

A related theory, current among anthropologists, is that rituals are used, in preliterate societies, to transmit "cultural and social values" to the younger generation. This would explain the informants' emphasis on tradition. But the assumption is, of course, unnecessary. Not only are rituals not confined to preliterate societies (it is anthropologists who tend to confine themselves to preliterate societies); but such

values (e.g., gods, myths, kinship systems) are most readily transmitted by grandmothers and through language, and there is no need for them to be transmitted again by other means. The only cultural values rituals transmit are rituals.

Another widespread theory is that ritual effects a transition from the realm of the profane to that of the sacred. (Instead of "transition" we also meet with "communication": a weaker version of the theory.) This is very intriguing and unclear. Terms such as "transition" or "communication" do not pose too much of a problem; but "sacred" and "profane" certainly do. Either the theory expresses a tautology: the distinction between profane and sacred is the distinction between the status of a person or object before and after a relevant ritual is embarked upon; accordingly, if sacred and profane have been defined in terms of ritual, ritual cannot be defined in terms of sacred and profane. This is circular and uninformative.

On another interpretation, this theory would assume that the distinction between sacred and profane is already established and known from elsewhere. For example, in the realm of divinity, "sacred" might have been shown to be the domain of the gods, and "profane" that of men. But a satisfactory distinction of this kind is not easily found, especially outside the realm of ritual. Moreover, the terms do not introduce anything new. The theory would merely claim that ritual effects a transition from the realm of men to that of the gods (or a communication between the two). As a matter of fact, the Vedic ritual offers an immediate contradiction. During the Soma rituals, a transition is effected from the "Old Hall," (*prācīnavaṃśa*) to the "Great Altar" (*mahāvedi)*. The former is said to be the abode of men, and the latter that of the gods. Thus a transition from the domain of men to that of the gods is effected *within* the ritual. The distinction therefore cannot serve as a concept in terms of which the ritual itself may be defined.

IV

Why has it proved so difficult to define the meaning, goals and aims of ritual? Why are there so many different answers and theories, not only often contradictory between themselves, but of such disparate character that it is difficult to even compare them with each other? There is one simple hypothesis which would account for all these puzzling facts: the hypothesis that ritual has no meaning, goal or aim.

This is precisely what I suspect to be the case. Ritual is pure activity, without meaning or goal. Let me briefly digress for a point of terminology. Things are either for their own sake, or for the sake of something else. If I were defending the view that ritual is for something else, it would be necessary to distinguish between such other things as meaning, function, aim or goal. But since my view is that ritual is for its own sake, I shall not bother about these differences. To say that ritual is for its own sake is to say that it is meaningless, without function, aim or goal, or also that it constitutes its own aim or goal. It does not follow that is has no value: but whatever value it has is intrinsic value.

Ritual exhibits its character of pure activity most readily when it is contrasted with the applied activities of our ordinary, everyday life. In ritual activity, the rules count, but not the result. In ordinary activity it is the other way around. In Vedic ritual, for example, an important ceremony is *agnipraṇayana,* "transporting the fire (from the Old to the New Altar)." This is in fact a transition from the abode of men to that of the gods. But the priests do not first think of men and then meditate on the gods. They think of neither, at any time. What is essential in the ceremony is the precise and faultless execution, in accordance with rules, of numerous rites and recitations. The result is important, but it has only ritual use and can only be reached in the ritually prescribed manner. I could not come in and assist in the proceedings by picking up the fire from the Old Altar and depositing it on the New. In fact, if I did such a horrible thing, the entire ceremony would be desecrated, interrupted, and expiation rites would have to be performed. Similar disasters would result if anyone used the sacred fire for any but a ritual purpose, e.g., to heat water for tea.

Now contrast this with an ordinary activity. I am about to transport my suitcase from my house to the bus stop, which is about a mile away. There are no rules I have to follow, provided I obtain the desired effect. I may put my suitcase on a skate board. Or my brother may appear on a bicycle, and the two of us use this vehicle to transport my suitcase to its intended destination.

The two kinds of activity, ritual and ordinary, can be juxtaposed without conflict or contradiction. After making fire for the altar in the ritually prescribed manner by rubbing two pieces of wood together, a priest leaves the sacred enclosure and lights a cigarette with a match.

Not so different, actually, from Arthur Rubinstein back home after a concert, putting on a gramophone record. But the two domains should not be mixed. If a priest would light a cigarette from the sacrificial fire, it would be bad. If he would light a cigarette from fire which he had produced by rubbing two pieces of wood together in the ritual manner, he would be considered mad or very eccentric. The ritual and ordinary ways of making fire are neatly demarcated.

A distinctive feature of ordinary activity is that it runs risks which ritual activity avoids. In ordinary activity, the entire performance may fail to have the desired effect. The bicycle together with its load may fall into a canal, or the suitcase may be seized by armed robbers. In ritual activity, the activity itself is all that counts. Not only have we established the rules ourselves, so that we are completely in control; we are also assured of success. If one rite goes wrong, another takes it place. This goes a long way to explain the curious fact that rituals, so apparently meaningless and useless, are at the same time readily engaged in. *Eo ipso* it explains that ritual activity has a pleasant, soothing effect. If you give up desire, you will be happy. This idea and the notion that ritual is performed for its own sake are closely connected and clearly foreshadowed by the Indian doctrine of *tyāga,* the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā, and by similar notions in other traditions, e.g., *wu-wei,* "absence of (effective) action" in Taoism, or the categorical imperative in Kant. It also accounts for the similarity between rites and games, which are equally unproductive, as Huizinga and Caillois have pointed out. But ritual is one up on most games because you cannot even lose.

Several anthropologists have detected features of meaningless in ritual, without recognizing that these features express its essence. Lévi-Strauss says that ritual "consists of utterances, gestures and manipulations of objects which are independent of the interpretations which are proper to these modes of activity and which result not from the ritual itself but from implicit mythology" (*L'homme nu,* 1971, page 600). If we remove the word "implicit" from this sentence (which means forsaking the author's ideas about the complementarity of myth and ritual) we approximate what I believe to be the correct theory. Van Gennep came close to the idea that ritual is meaningless. After completing his *Rites de passage,* he noted that marriage ceremonies, in many societies, include an aspersion rite which he inter-

preted as a fecundity rite. But identical aspersion rites are employed, in the same and in different societies, when a slave is acquired, when a new ambassador arrives in town, to make rain or to expel someone. Like Indian commentators, Van Gennep gave different interpretations to each of these rites. He concluded: "the aspersion rite does not have any personal or basic meaning in the state of isolation, but it is meaningful if seen as a component part of a particular ceremony. The meaning of the rite can, consequently, only be found by determining the relation it has with the other elements of the whole ceremony." [3]

Aspersion rites are not confined to humans. In his Sather lectures at Berkeley, Walter Burkert dealt with the ritual pouring of liquids for marking a territory and observed that this is quite common in mammals: "we all know the dog's behavior at the stone." — In the development of our concepts and theories of ritual it it only a small step from "changing meaning" to: "no intrinsic meaning" and „structural meaning," and from there to: "no meaning."

If ritual is useless this does not imply that it may not have useful side-effects. It is obvious, for example, that ritual creates a bond between the participants, reinforces solidarity, boosts morale and constitutes a link with the ancestors. So do many other institutions and customs. Such side-effects cannot be used to explain the origin of ritual, though they may help to explain its preservation. They explain why rituals are preserved though their meaninglessness is recognized, like the Jewish ritual of the Red Heifer which baffled even Solomon and which was considered the classic example of a divine command for which no rational explanation can be adduced.

These side-effects fail to explain the most curious fact about ritual preservation: rituals are always guarded jealously and with extreme conservatism. This is directly explained by the theory that ritual has no meaning. A useful institution is open; it may undergo change, because efforts are made to render it more (or less) useful. A useless institution is closed; it is not understood and therefore can only be abandoned or preserved. There are parallels to this situation from

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[3] "De la méthode à suivre dans l'étude des rites et des mythes," *Revue de l'université de Bruxelles*, 1911, pages 505-23; English translation in J. Waardenburg (ed.), *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion*, The Hague-Paris 1973, I, page 299.

outside the realm of ritual. In India, during the last 3000 years, the Vedic language gave way to classical Sanskrit which was in due course replaced by Middle and Modern Indo-Aryan languages. During all these changes the Vedic mantras were orally transmitted without any change. Why? Because they had become meaningless. Languages change because they express meaning, are functional and constantly used. Meaningless sounds do not change; they can only be remembered or forgotten.

Freud has drawn attention to similarities between ritual and neurosis. The obsessiveness which pervades ritual has led several anthropologists to emphasize the emotions and anxiety which sometimes accompany ritual, and which they claim underlie it. In *L'homme nu,* Lévi-Strauss has located such anxiety in the ritualists' fear that reality, which they have cut up ritually, cannot be put together again. But it is apparent that the obsessiveness of ritual is also an immediate consequence of its meaninglessness. Nothing is more conducive to uneasiness than to be entrapped in absurdity. If I detect a mistake in cooking or calculating, I perceive the result and understand the reason. But if I have made a ritual mistake, I don't notice any difference and don't see any reason. I am not even sure whether I made a mistake or not, and there is no way to determine it. It is like being in a foreign culture where strange things happen and it is not clear whether one has made a *faux pas.* The Agnicayana performance of 1975 was followed by a long series of expiation rites, for mistakes that might have been committed. Our anxiety is greatest when we don't know why we are anxious.

The meaninglessness of ritual explains the variety of meanings attached to it. It could not be otherwise. Ideal activity cannot fail to resemble actual activity. Therefore rituals resemble other things, including features of myth and social structure. However, though a ritual activity may resemble a meaningful non-ritual activity, this does not imply that it must itself be meaningful. This can be seen in the realm of animal ritualization, as well as in the human domain. Among animals, ritualization often implies that the goal of an activity has changed. Many ritual displays incorporate modes of action which originally had a different function, e.g., fighting. Such ritual displays may acquire a new function: they lead to copulation because they are sexually stimulating, for example. Some of the same ritual displays, however, are post-nuptial or post-reproductive, and therefore not clearly func-

tional. Biologists find them puzzling (e.g., Huxley [4]).

Human ritualization often follows animal ritualization rather closely. Fighting, simulated or real, is still sexually stimulating among humans. But typical human forms of ritualization seem in general to dissolve meaning, not replace it. One of the earliest rituals originated in connection with the use of fire. During most of its existence, mankind did not know how to use it. Subsequently, more than 250,000 years ago, man learned the use of fire; but he could not make it. So fire was collected from natural conflagrations and was carefully kept and carried around. Elaborate techniques were devised for the preservation of fire. Finally, more than 50,000 years ago, man learned how to make fire. At this point ritualization and the cult of fire came into being. For instead of relying on his art of making fire, and producing it whenever he needed it (which is easy at least during a dry season or in a dry climate), man continued to carry fire around. A distinction was made between such "eternal" fire and the "new" fire which could now be made—a distinction we have since abandoned as irrational. To ancient man, and in several existing societies, fires have retained individuality. They should not be mixed. Fires have to be extinguished, or newly made, at set times by ritual experts. Alongside, the continued preservation of "eternal" fire reflects fossilized habits which had lasted some 200,000 years.

A more recent example comes from the Agnicayana. [5] During the ceremony of *agnipraṇayana,* when fire is transported from the Old to the New Altar, one of the priests engages in a long recitation. The recitation is of an ancient battle hymn, the Apratiratha or "Song to the Irresistible Warrior" (Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4.6.4, cf. Ṛgveda 10.103 and 6.75). Indra is invoked as a victorious warrior or hero, "fond of slaughter, disturber of peoples", who with the help of his arrows, chariots and troups, destroys the enemies. When the priest recites: "Comrades, follow in Indra's footsteps!", he sounds less like an officiating priest than like a gang leader or a commander-in-chief. And what is the origin of all of this? At an earlier period, the Vedic Aryans fought their way into the Indian subcontinent, moving from west to east and

[4] J. Huxley (ed.), "A Discussion on Ritualization of Behavior in Animals and Man," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London,* 1966, Series B, No. 772, Vol. 251, page 254.

[5] Cf. J. C. Heesterman, "Vrātya and Sacrifice," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 6, 1962, pages 34-36.

carrying fire. In the *agnipraṇayana* rite, fire is still carried from west to east. But the priests are not celebrating the ancient raids of their ancestors, of which they need not even be aware. The function of the hymn has not changed. It has become ritual, i.e., disappeared.

Can the hypothesis of the meaninglessness of ritual be formulated in terms of evolution or development? Necessarily so, but we have to speculate back to the origin of man. Philosophers, especially in Germany, have made much of self-consciousness as a characteristic of man, but we are rarely told what this means. I think that man became aware of himself primarily as an agent. Like many other animals, he was already aware of the outside world and could communicate to a limited extent with other members of the species (which does not imply that he possessed language). Abandoning a sense of being pushed around, man made the discovery that he affected the outside world by engaging in activity—a pursuit wrought with risk and danger. So he created a world of ritual or ideal activity, intrinsically successful and free from such contingencies. It expressed man's awareness of himself, and paved the way for theory construction and language, as we shall see. Much later, when ritual was contrasted with ordinary, everyday activity, its meaninglessness became patent and various rationalizations and explanations were constructed. Ritual became deeply involved with religion, which always stands in need of the mysterious and unexplained. Rites were attached to all important events. In the course of time rituals, instead of remaining useless and pure, became useful and meritorious.

Throughout the history of man's speculation on ritual we find inklings of its original function as perfect activity. Just as the Indians mused about *śrauta* rituals, the Chinese theorized about *li*, which means: rites, ceremonies, rules of good manners and proper conduct, etiquette. The Confucian philosopher Hsün Tzŭ (third century B.C.) explained the origin of the *li* as follows:

> Man at birth has desires. When these desires are not satisfied, he cannot remain without seeking their satisfaction. When this seeking for satisfaction is without measure or limit, there can only be contention. When there is contention, there will be disorder; when there is disorder, everything will be destroyed. The early kings hated this disorder, and so they established the *li* and standards of justice so as to set limits to this confusion, to satisfy men's desires, and give opportunity to this satisfaction, in order that desires should not be stretched to the breaking point by things, nor things be used

up by desires; that both these two should mutually support one another and so continue to exist. This is how the *li* originated.[6]

V

Enough of generalities. If ritual consists in the precise execution of rules, it must be possible to know what its rules are. The rules of the *śrauta* ritual have been formulated with great care in the *śrauta sūtras*, and made accessible by Sanskrit scholars, foremost among them Willem Caland. Searching for the best literature outside the Vedic, one soon finds out that there is no literature at all. Lévi-Strauss, in *L'homme nu* (pages 601-603), distinguishes two basic ritual operations: "morcellement" (dismemberment, fragmentation) and repetition. But he offers no actual rules. Hubert and Mauss showed little more than that rites have a beginning, a middle and an end. Scholars and students of ritual seem to lag behind their colleagues who study the rules of measurement, counting or language, and who have for millenia been familiar with some of the rules which obtain in their respective domains. Among students of ritual — whether religiously, anthropologically or psychologically inspired — we mostly meet with generalities. The reason for this neglect is rooted in the nature of ritual itself: if a thing is useless, it is not taken seriously. Thus we do not possess much in the way of a science of ritual, even though the subject is certainly amenable to precise investigation, not unlike physics, mathematics or grammar.

Even at this early stage of pre-scientific groping, in which we find ourselves, it is not impossible to formulate ritual rules. I shall give a few examples from Vedic ritual. This will necessarily involve some detail (for more, see Staal, forthcoming [7]). We must start with the observation that the *śrauta* rituals constitute a hierarchy. Four of them, for example, which I shall refer to by capital letters, are listed in the following order:

D: "Full and New Moon ceremonies" (*darśapūrṇamāsa*)
P: "Animal Sacrifice" (*paśubandha*)
A. "Praise of Agni" (*agniṣṭoma*, paradigm of the Soma rituals)
C: "Piling of Agni" (*agnicayana*).

[6] Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, transl. Derk Bodde, Princeton 1952, I, page 297.
[7] "Ritual Syntax," *Sanskrit and Indian Studies. Essays in Honor of Daniel H. H. Ingalls;* "Ritual Structure," *Agni. The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, volume II.

This sequence is not arbitrary. There is increasing complexity. A person is in general only eligible to perform a later ritual in the sequence, if he has already performed the earlier ones. Each later ritual presupposes the former and incorporates one or more occurrences of one or more of the former rituals. Sometimes these embedded rituals are abbreviated. In general, they undergo modifications. We find the following embeddings, among others:

In P, performances of D are embedded when a cake of eight potsherds is offered to Agni and when a cake of eleven potsherds is offered to Agni-Viṣṇu;

in A are embedded: two performances of P (for Agni-Soma and for Pressing Soma) and several performances of D (called Consecration, Going Forth, Final Bath, Conclusion and Departure, etc., not to mention performances of D embedded in P);

in C, a performance of A, fourteen performances of P and numerous performances of D, some already embedded in A and P, are embedded.

This enumeration is by no means complete, but it may serve to illustrate the "embedding" feature of the underlying structure.

Now for the modifications which rituals undergo when they are embedded, and, more generally, in different contexts. First of all, the deities to which rites on different occasions are dedicated are often different, which induces differences at least in the names which occur in many of the recitations. Even within D itself, one of the main oblations is for Agni-Soma at full moon, but for Indra-Agni at new moon. Similarly, the different deities to which the different animals in performances of P are dedicated, induce differences in recitation. But apart from these substitutions there are numerous more complex modifications which are induced by embedding. I shall give one simple example. In the regular performance of D, there are *fifteen sāmidhenī* verses, recited when the twigs of firewood are put on the fire. But at the performance of D which is embedded in P when a cake on eleven potsherds is offered to Agni-Viṣṇu, there are *seventeen sāmidhenī* verses. Such examples can be multiplied almost indefinitely.

Though all these rituals involve embeddings and modifications, it does not follow that there is a unique description in terms of these for each particular ritual. For example, C may be analysed differently as

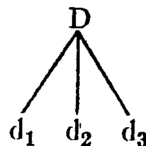
an Atirātra, viz., a modification of A, in which the construction of the New Altar is modified. Such an alternative analysis would necessitate a different structural analysis; what is important in the present context is only that it would involve embeddings and modifications.

In order to get an inkling of the syntax of these structures, we have had to enter into some complexity even though I have made several simplifications. In order to explicate the rules, I shall have to simplify differently and construct a model of a ritual — a more formal representation corresponding to what Hubert and Mauss called a "schème abstrait du sacrifice." In order to make this precise, a series of artificial assumptions will be made, defining D, P and A. The reason for these artificial assumptions and definitions is merely that they constitute a model which exhibits specific structures and rules of the ritual. This model is similar with respect to these structures to the really existing rituals, but is much less elaborate than the latter. What is important is that the existing rituals can be analysed in the same manner as the model with regard to the structures in which we are here interested.

Let us assume that a *ritual* consists of smaller units, which I shall call *rites*. The rites of ritual "D" will be written as "d," those of "P" as "p," etc. Now let us make more specific assumptions. Let D consist of three rites, d_1, d_2 and d_3. I shall write this as a rule:

$$D \rightarrow d_1\ d_2\ d_3. \qquad (1)$$

This may be illustrated as in Figure 1:



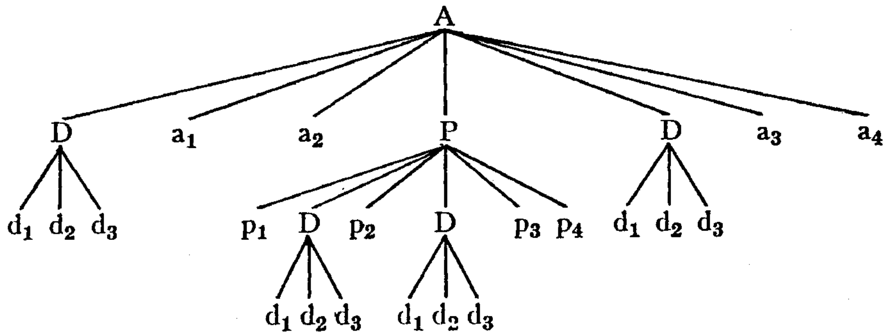
Ritual P involves several performances of D. Let us assume:

$$P \rightarrow p_1\ D\ p_2\ D\ p_3\ p_4. \qquad (2)$$

Similarly, A involves performances of P, as well as of D directly, e.g.:

$$A \rightarrow D\ a_1\ a_2\ P\ D\ a_3\ a_4. \qquad (3)$$

A representation of the structure of (3) is given in Figure 2:

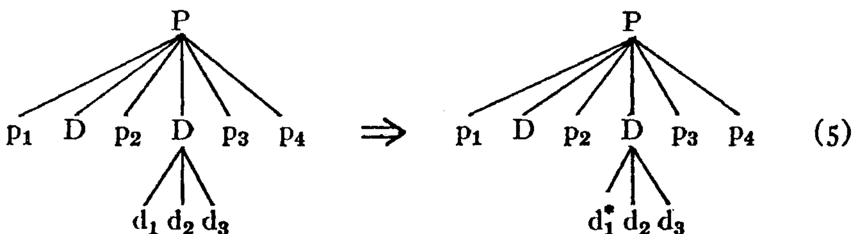


This picture does not correspond to any existing ritual. However, it expresses, precisely, one of the main features of ritual structure, which I have referred to as *embedding.*

We have already met with a second structure: rituals which are embedded undergo *modification.* We may introduce the example I gave into our model by assuming that in ritual D, the first rite, d_1, represents the recitation of fifteen *sāmidhenī* verses. Let us further assume that in the second occurrence of D in P, rite d_1 has to be replaced by a rite d_1^*, in which seventeen *sāmidhenī* verses are recited. We cannot simply represent this transformation by adding an expression:

$$d_1 \rightarrow d_1^* \qquad (4)$$

for the effect of this would be that all occurrences of d_1 are replaced by occurrences of d_1^*. What we must do is, replace by d_1^* only the d_1 in the second occurrence of D in P. This can be done by introducing a different kind of rule which can be effected by means of an expression which uses a different symbol instead of the single arrow $\rightarrow$, for example a double arrow $\Rightarrow$. We have to represent the entire configuration in which d_1 occurs since it is not otherwise possible to single out the d_1 we wish to single out. This can be done as follows:



Again, this rule does not correspond to any actual rule, but it expresses, precisely, the feature of ritual structure which I have referred to as *modification*. In the forthcoming article on "Ritual Syntax" I have shown that there are also other types of ritual rules than those which exhibit embedding and modification.

IV

No linguist will have failed to observe the similarity of these ritual rules with the rules of syntax. The single arrow rules which pertain to ritual embedding correspond to the phrase structure rules of syntax; the double arrow rules which pertain to ritual modification correspond to its transformational rules. This correspondence is not due to the fact that I selected ritual rules which appear to resemble syntactic rules. The rules of embedding and modification are in fact very basic rules of ritual, or at least of Vedic ritual.

The partial similarity between ritual and syntax could mean that ritualists follow, albeit unconsciously, the rules of syntax which they had internalized when they learned their native language. I am inclined to the opposite view: syntax comes from ritual. A simple consideration in support of this idea is that animals have ritual, but not language. But there are weightier considerations. Syntax is the part of language which stands most in need of explanation. Language relates sounds to meanings, and so it must necessarily comprise a domain of sounds (studied in phonetics and phonology) and a domain of meanings (studied in semantics). If language were rational and adapted to its purpose, sounds and meanings would be related by means of a 1-1 correspondance. If this were true of natural languages, assuming semantics to be universal, different natural languages would also stand to each other in a 1-1 correspondance, and translation could be effected with the help of dictionaries only. There would be no need for artificial languages, and logicians would be out of business.

What we do find in language is something different. Meanings and sounds are related to each other through a vast and complicated domain of structured rules: syntax. The transition between sound and meaning is unnecessarily complex, roundabout and mathematically absurd. "Nobody in his right mind would attempt to build an artificial language based on phrase structure plus transformations"

(J. A. Fodor [8]). How are we to explain such apparent redundancies? It is not enough to say, as communication theorists might, that redundancies are necessary for communication because they decrease mistakes in reception. That assumes that language is only for the sake of communication, which it is not. More importantly, such redundancies, to perform their alleged function, merely need be random: which cannot explain syntax, a structured domain of specific rules which in fact makes language unlogical and inefficient. These specific rules, which are without rhyme or reason, must come from elsewhere. They look like a rudiment of something quite diferent. The similarity between syntax and ritual suggests that the origin of syntax is ritual.

The ritual origin of syntax has implications not only in language but also in religion. I shall mention three. Ritual is replete with language, but it is very often meaningless language. When a small golden image of a man is buried under the fire altar of the Agnicayana, the Chief Priest of the Sāmaveda chants songs which contain such sounds as:

kā hvā hvā hvā hvā hvā
phal phal phal phal phal
hau hau hau hau hau
bham bham ... (eighteen times).

Such structured sounds partake of the syntax of ritual, but do not relate to meaning. This applies to most mantras. Originally, language was born when such structured sounds were connected with meaning. The state immediately preceding language survives in religion as mantras and magical spells: *abracadabra.* Unlike language, these are universal and need no translation. The abundance of such formulas in Buddhism facilitated its introduction into China, where their way was paved by the sacred noises of popular Taoism.

A second feature is that mysticism is characterized by the absence of language. It points to a pre-linguistic state which can be induced by ritual, by recitation, by silent meditation on mantras, or by other means, as I have shown in *Exploring Mysticism.* All these methods help to eliminate meaning, sound and (ritual) structure.

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8 In: F. Smith and G. A. Miller (eds), *The Genesis of Language: A Psycholinguistic Approach*, Cambridge, Mass. 1966, page 270.

Wittgenstein had an inkling of the place which language occupies in religion when he remarked:

> Is speech essential for religion? I can very well imagine a religion in which there are no doctrines, and hence nothing is said. Obviously the essence of religion can have nothing to do with the fact that speech occurs — or rather: if speech does occur, this itself is a component of religious behavior [the German original has: *Handlung*, "activity"] and not a theory. Therefore nothing turns on whether the words are true, false or nonsensical.[9]

The ritual origin of syntax is connected with another curious fact, which I mentioned in passing: the Vedic gods fought and created not only with ritual, but also with meters and chants. What an extraordinary thing to do! But no, it is not. Meters and chants are like ritual in that they fail to express meaning, but reflect syntactic structure in its pure form, hence pure activity.

VII

We have not come to the end of our investigation. On the contrary, we have hardly begun. What I hope to have shown is that ritual, which has so far been impervious to our understanding, is meaningless and also a subject amenable to serious study. Once we abandon generalities and start working, a first adequate theory will undoubtedly emerge, sooner or later. Such a theory will not only elucidate ritual; it will throw light on the origins of language, religion, and perhaps man.

What will a theory of ritual be like? — Let us reflect once more on the Agnicayana. The main altar is constructed in the shape of a bird from 1005 kiln-fired bricks, 200 each in four layers, and 205 in the fifth layer which comes on top. The configuration of the first, third and fifth layer is the same; and so is that of the second and fourth. The surface of each layer is 7-1/2 times a square of the Yajamāna's length. The bricks are of ten different shapes. There are 136 squares, 48 oblongs of one size, and 302 of another. In addition there are 207 halves of squares, 202 halves of oblongs, and five more groups consisting of bricks arrived at by further subdivision of the former shapes. There are ten bricks which are half as thick as all the others. All the bricks constitute furthermore another set of groups, each with

[9] F. Waismann, "Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein," *The Philosophical Review* 74, 1965, page 16.

its own name and consecrated by particular mantras. Most bricks have to be consecrated in a specific, very roundabout order; others may be consecrated in any order, provided one general direction is maintained and the location of the final brick is fixed. Some bricks have figures drawn on them. Others are lifted from their proper place, carried around the altar and put back before they can be fully consecrated. All of this, and much more, is in accordance with numerous precise rules, for which in almost all cases no explanation whatever is offered. Whether or not the rules are arbitrary, they are strictly adhered to. In case of controversy or differences of interpretation, various schools arise which establish different traditions. Unlike sects, ritual traditions co-exist peacefully, they are mutually exclusive and there is neither desire, nor mechanism for conversion. This feature, too, has become a mark of Indian religions.

And so we may return to the question what a theory of ritual would be like. It is unlikely that such a theory, if at all adequate, will be simple, viz., more simple than the ritual facts themselves. There will be complaints about its myriad rules, as there have been about Chomsky and Halle's *Sound Pattern of English*, Euclid's *Elements*, and the *śrauta sūtras*.

A final paragraph and consolation. There must be readers who are shocked, angry or depressed at the thought that ritual (not to mention religion and even language) is not only complex but also meaningless. I am not a bit sad about it. I prefer a thing, like a person, to be itself, and not refer to something or somebody else. For all we know life itself may be meaningless. Seen from without, the life of an ant seems to be just that, a thought that must have occurred to King Solomon (*Proverbs* 6:6). Neither ants, nor we are any the worse for it.

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ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS FACTORS IN INDIAN METAPHYSICS

As has been indicated earlier, it is possible to show roughly why the various *viewpoints and schools of Indian metaphysics assumed the shapes that they did. It is often the case that a metaphysical system is a coherent elaboration of a single main thesis, or of some few central theses. From a cluster of insights (or supposed insights) a whole set of doctrines is excogitated. In the case of Indian philosophy, with its powerful connection with religion, it is necessary to look for the determining religious motivation behind the various *viewpoints. This, as we shall see, does not quite work in every case—especially *Logic-Atomism—but it works in a sufficient number to justify the procedure. It needs to be remembered, too, that Indian philosophy is on the whole markedly *traditional.* That is, the roots of the different *viewpoints and schools usually go back a very long way, sometimes to disappear into the recesses of unknown antiquity. Consequently, the shape of a system is often determined, so far as we can see, by factors other than those of speculative inquiry. This is a further reason why there is a need to consider the systems in relation to underlying religious intuitions which, more often than not, they express.

All this is not to say that the arguments which we shall be describing in the Part II are valueless because they (so some might think) are mere rationalizations designed to bolster existing prejudices. Such a view would be quite misleading, for at least two reasons. First of all, though an analysis of religious motives will serve to illuminate the underlying reasons for the main shape of the various systems under discussion, it only does that. It cannot hope to be an account which explains all the details, and where the latter are concerned with, for example, epistemological issues, it is wise to consider them as determined, so to say, by reason rather than faith. Second, the validity or otherwise of arguments, and their intrinsic interest, do not depend upon their provenance or upon who utters them. It would be as foolish

to ignore the dialectical side of Indian philosophy out of a scepticism about religion as it would be to dismiss Western mediaeval philosophy solely because of its general alliance with theology. It should also be recognized that though the basic insights of a system may be religious in character, the working up of the system which expresses them may be a task exhibiting considerable brilliance. One is inclined to feel this in the case of Śankara. His idealism is perhaps, to eyes unaccustomed to the spiritual intentions of such a form of speculation, bizarre. But there is no mistaking its curious boldness and economy.

In the course of the preceding chapters I have made some brief attempt to characterize some of the religious motivations of the systems, and this will have sufficiently indicated the main features of the present analysis. It will already have become apparent, for example, that the activities of *meditation, or yoga as broadly considered, and of worship and *devotion to God provide a polarity which helps to account for the shapes of various systems. It is extraordinarily important, if we are to give an account of the matter in terms of religious insights, etc., that attention be paid to empirical religion, and in particular to the religious procedures and activities lying at its centre. It is not sufficient to say about a metaphysician or theologian that, for instance, he wishes to resist a pantheistic doctrine and therefore argues that such-and-such. We want to know further about his distaste for pantheism. We will usually find either that he is resting on some orthodoxy, which puts the problem back a stage, or that (more likely) his feeling for the distinctness of God and man, and therefore his suspicion of its apparent abrogation in a doctrine of pantheism, arises out of his practice of worship and of his consequent religious experience. We can say that there is a correlation between certain forms of religious experience and types of ritual or procedural ambience—the experience of the *soul's *isolation in contemplative states, for example, correlates with a form of yoga; and the idea of a personal God, met with in prayer, goes with a religion of adoration and worship. Thus it is important to relate doctrines to their earthly manifestation, in the practices and experiences of religion. In this, the Indian tradition constitutes an extraordinarily fascinating spiritual laboratory.

I have referred to *meditation and *devotionalism as constituting a polarity in religious practice and experience which will help to illuminate the varieties of Indian metaphysics. But *devotionalism, in the sense of fervent adoration of, and reliance on, the *Lord, is not strictly characteristic of the Upaniṣadic period; but emerges clearly first in the *Gītā* and in the Mahāyāna schools. But it is related to the earlier

Brāhmanical religion: for it is the bringing into the formal worship of the holy *Power a strong element of love and obedience. In so far as *devotionalism occurs in an *orthodox context, as in the *Gītā* and the mediaeval theologies, the antique ritualism of the Veda is not repudiated, but reinterpreted as requiring as its inner essence the love of God. This is analogous to the way some of the sacrificial elements in Vedic ritual were reinterpreted from a yogic point of view. But already in the Upaniṣads there is clearly evident a strand of worship, itself going back to the worship expressed in the hymns of the Veda. Thus in an important way the *devotional religion of the *Gītā* can be seen as a deepening and personalizing of the formal worship incorporated in Brahmanism. It would therefore be useful to keep in mind that the polarity is not just between *meditation and associated yogic practices on the one hand and *devotion on the other; but more broadly between yoga and the religion of worship (of which *devotionalism is a fervent expression). But since the schools and *viewpoints we are considering took their shape for the most part in the later period, I shall simply refer to this polarity as that between *meditation and *devotionalism.

The presence of these elements needs, as we have seen, to be correlated with doctrines; and for this purpose it is useful to select a few key concepts whose presence and absence in the various systems can be set out. The discrimination of these key ideas will involve comparisons between the schools, and will sometimes necessarily have a certain crudity. But the crudity will not be, I think, of such a degree as to vitiate the results. One cause of the crudity is that metaphysical schemes are organic, or partly so—in the sense that concepts have to be understood in the light of at least a segment of the whole system.

The first of the key ideas I wish to isolate is that of the Absolute. That is, we can ask about a *viewpoint: 'Does it affirm the existence of an Absolute?' By Absolute here, as we have seen earlier (p. 36), is meant the inner essence of the observable cosmos, which is conceived in an impersonal manner (i.e. in this way, it differs from the concept of the *Lord). As has been argued earlier (p. 59), this idea is affirmed in Mahāyāna schools, but not in the *Elder Doctrine: i.e. nirvana as conceived in the latter is not an Absolute in this sense. The use of the notion of an Absolute makes it possible for us to make a direct comparison between the Greater Vehicle schools we discussed in an earlier chapter and Śankara's *Non-Dualism. About both Śankara and these Buddhists it is true that they affirmed the existence of an Absolute.

The next key idea I wish to consider is that of the *Lord. Here it should be noted that I mean a personal God, but not necessarily a

Creator. Thus the celestial Buddha who forms the object of *devotionalism in the Greater Vehicle can be counted as equivalent to the Hindu notion of the *Lord, even though in Buddhism there is strictly no doctrine of the *creation of the world (in line with the Buddha's agnosticism).[1] Then again, in so far as later Yoga developed a doctrine of God, this was simply belief in an ever-liberated *soul who was *Lord and object of meditation, etc., but not creator of the world. Thus we can ask about the notion of a *Lord in a particular system: 'Does the system affirm the existence of such a being?' and also: 'Is the *Lord creator of the world?'

A third key idea is that of an eternal *soul, *self or *life-monad (these are essentially equivalent in the Indian tradition). Since this is distinguished from the empirical ego and the psycho-physical organism, we can ask, in regard to each system: 'Does each psycho-physical organism possess an individual *self?' Thus we would answer 'No' in regard to *Non-Dualism. This *viewpoint does, however, make use of the concept of an eternal (but unitary) *Self, but in view of its identification with the Absolute, we may neglect framing a separate question to cover this case. As we have seen, there are differences within and between the various *viewpoints as the constitution of the *selves, but these variations will be neglected for the time being.

A fourth key idea in the Indian tradition is that of rebirth or reincarnation. All systems save *Materialism share this belief: but it needs to be distinguished from belief in an eternal or everlasting *self, since (as in Buddhism and in *Non-Dualism) one can have the concept of a transmigrating person who does not possess an individual eternal *self.

Fifth, throughout the tradition, except for *Materialism, there is belief in the possibility of *release. Again, there are variations in the way in which it is described, and some variety in terminology (for instance, nirvana, one of the words for *release in the Indian tradition, has virtually replaced its rivals in the description of Buddhist salvation).

As a preliminary move we can draw up a table to exhibit the pattern of belief in terms of these key ideas in relation to the *meditation-*devotionalism polarity. But in virtue of the close association between some schools—*Distinctionism and Yoga, for example, certain differences of emphasis may be obscured. Thus though both *Distinctionism and Yoga, typically of mystical or contemplative thought, lay stress on inner *knowledge, the former school is more 'intellectual' in its emphasis. Likewise the *Void school in relation to its close relation, Buddhist *Idealism. By 'intellectual' is meant here that the part played by reflection on metaphysical truths, so that they acquire an existential

impact, is given more prominence than the psycho-physical postures and exercises of yoga. However, this merely represents a further polarity within the conception of *meditation in the Indian tradition. As we have seen earlier, the contemplative path is undertaken in terms of a certain conceptual ambience, and a grasp of metaphysical truth is supposed to go alongside the attainment of contemplative states (thus both *insight and *peace are elements of nirvana). The pursuit of this gnosis thus has two sides to it; and the polarity between metaphysical *knowledge and yogic experience sometimes leads to a bifurcation between the two sides.[2] One may compare the bifurcation between faith and works within the sphere of devotional Christianity. Thus in our preliminary table, I shall use the category *meditative *knowledge to cover both sides of the polarity. We shall then further have to see what difference it will make to our correlations if a distinction within this category is made.

There is a further complication to take account of. Both Śankara and some Mahāyānists affirm both belief in the Absolute and in a *Lord. But it is important for our purposes to distinguish between the emphases the two ideas have. This difference metaphysically is represented by the fact that the *Lord is conceived as being connected with an *illusory world and so shares in its *illusoriness or *insubstantiality. It is therefore an idea at the 'lower' or *ordinary level of truth that is in use when we make empirical statements, etc. It is therefore convenient to insert a further question about the systems, namely 'Is the cosmos a reality?' This will show in a general way whether a system is idealistic or not. Where the answer to the question about the cosmos is 'No', it should be kept in mind that the idea of the *Lord has merely secondary importance. We may now consider our questions in relation to the systems, by means of the following table. 'X' means that the idea is affirmed; 'O' that it is either absent or denied. In the lines of the table referring to *devotion and *meditation, the symbols mean that one and not the other is the dominant spiritual practice: but we shall later have to investigate the relation between the two in a little more detail. For convenience, I have arranged the table so that, where possible, the neighbours of a system show the nearest similarities to it.

Some significant facts emerge from a contemplation of this table. It happens, however, that *Logic-*Atomism and Yoga are, for idiosyncratic reasons which I shall come to, jokers in my pack. If we neglect them for the moment, our list of correlations is increased, and I shall then explain why my analysis of the situation does not, superficially at least, fit these *viewpoints. Our facts, then, are as follows.

I

(1) Where *devotion is important, there is belief in a *Lord.

(2) Belief in an Absolute is coupled with belief in a *Lord at a lower level of truth.

(3) Stress on *meditation as primary implies that the *Lord is not regarded as primary.

(4) Belief in the *Lord as primary correlates with a belief in many *selves.

(5) Where *meditation is primary, there is no belief in a genuine *creator (column 1 shows a *creator; but one that is implicated in the grand *illusion).

	*NON-DUALISM	*VOIDISM	*IDEALISM	*QUALIFIED NON-DUALISM	*DUALISM	*ŚAIVITE DOCTRINE	*LOGIC-*ATOMISM	YOGA	*DISTINCTIONISM	*EXEGESIS	JAINISM	*ELDER DOCTRINE	*MATERIALISM
Absolute	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
*Lord	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O
*Creator	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O	O
world real	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
*selves	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
rebirth	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
*release	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
*devotion	O	O	O	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
*meditative knowledge	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	O	X	X	O

We may also observe from the table that similarities are cross-religious: Hindu *Non-Dualism is close to Buddhist *Voidism: Jainism is close to *Distinctionism. Vaiṣṇavite *Dualism and Śaivite Doctrine are akin. These facts serve to encourage an analysis in terms of religious experience, since such an explanation ought not to apply to one tradition alone: that is, the idea that a certain type of religious experience is specific to one tradition alone would explain little.

The above-listed facts clearly indicate the correlation between *devotionalism and *theism. But they leave obscure the reason why it is that a primary emphasis on *meditation should result either in

Absolutism or *atheism. Nevertheless (2) provides a hint. The hint can be followed up by further considering the relation between *meditation and *devotion and worship in the principal systems we are considering. Now if we contrast the *Elder Doctrine with the Mahāyāna schools we note that in the latter, though *devotionalism plays a subordinate part, it certainly exists. That is to say, with the Mahāyāna, as we have seen, there was a considerable growth of popular religion, and with it the development of a fairly fervent *devotionalism. This was, in a sense, tamed by the orthodoxically Buddhist insistence on the contemplative life as the culmination of the Path. But in comparison with the *Elder Doctrine, which even in later days does not recognize the worship—in the proper signification of the term—of the Buddha, and which of course does not accept the idea of a transcendent Being who might serve as the object of worship, the Greater Vehicle schools show a remarkable degree of *devotionalism. It becomes indeed a secondary means of salvation, for faith in the Buddha helps towards the realization of a more refined spiritual life, whether in this world or in some *heaven. It becomes part of the way of the Bodhisattva. A very similar situation obtains in regard to *Non-Dualism. For the religion of worship is recognized as part of the preparation for the ultimate realization of non-duality. Even if it be an inferior form of faith, it is *praeparatio mystica*. In both the Greater Vehicle schools and *Non-Dualism, therefore, *devotionalism is an ancillary to *meditative *knowledge. (The doctrine of rebirth clearly makes it easier for such a view to be taken: though the lower-level truth may be inferior, it can be of use to people who are at a certain stage of development, and may assist them to higher attainments in one of their lives to come.)

We might signalize this relation between *meditation and *devotion in the Absolutistic schools by assigning different weights to the two forms of religious life. In revising the bottom two lines of our table, we shall adopt this procedure. But meanwhile a further problem afflicts us—namely what we are to say about, for intance, the religious life of the *Dualist school. As we saw earlier, in dealing with this system, Madhva certainly makes a form of *meditation central to the spiritual life. However, what he meant by *meditation does not quite correspond to its significance in *Non-Dualism, Yoga and elsewhere. For *meditation involves an awareness of God as its object, according to Madhva. That is, it is the contemplative life suffused with, and seen from the perspective of, *devotionalism. It would not be misleading to describe this as *devotional *meditation, and assign it to a separate category for the purposes of this analysis. For since it is *meditation somewhat

suffused with a theistic attitude, it would be unclear, if we wish to show the relative weights of *devotion and *meditation in the various systems (or in the religious life correlated with them), to pigeonhole it simply either with one arm of our polarity or the other. Thus *Dualism is correlated with both *devotional *meditation and the purely devotional religion of worship which Vaiṣṇavism tends to express. Similar remarks can be made about Śaivite Doctrine, as we saw in our discussion of that school. The concept of *devotional *meditation will also be of use when we deal with one of our 'jokers', namely Yoga. Yoga in essence was almost certainly *atheistic until a fairly late period, and the grafting on of belief in a *Lord was little more than the recognition that *orthodox Yogins by then were already using a form of meditation, in addition to the mainstream practices distilled in Yoga, one which involved *meditation upon the splendour of the *Lord, as a means helping the adept towards his ultimate goal. In this way, Yoga was affected, but only very moderately and marginally, by the growth of *devotional religion in the period from the *Gītā* onwards.

There are some remarks too which need to be made about the other 'joker', namely *Logic-*Atomism. Here it is indeed hard to account for the shape of the system by reference directly to the religious insights, etc., which it wished to express. Not only was it probably *atheistic; but also, it seems to have grafted on to itself elements from *orthodox religion in a very formal way. In view of its origins, it was not primarily interested in presenting any sort of way of salvation. In theory, however, it was intellectualist in its prescription for *release. Knowledge of the true system was adequate for salvation. Superficially therefore it looked like *Distinctionism. But it would be spurious to explain its features directly by reference to the forms of the religious life we are now considering; and so I shall continue to neglect it, for the time being, in this analysis.

*Logic-*Atomism is, in a sense, doubly the converse of *Exegesis. The latter is a very curious phenomenon. It arose, of course, from the need to give a reasoned account of ritual. But ritual itself was in origin merely a highly formalized means of expressing men's relations to the gods of Vedic religion. It thus springs from the activities of worship and sacrifice, which themselves foreshadow the more intensely personal *devotionalism of later Indian religion. But the growth of ritualism detached the ritual from the gods, and the holy *Power came to be conceived—not as a single being underlying the many gods, its variegated manifestation—but as something implicit in ritual activities: a force to be manipulated. In some respects, this was not surprising—

since the concept of an impersonal power implicit in ritual or other objects is not uncommon in early religion. But in effect *Exegesis represents a stage where the outer manifestations of religion which had a direct connection with worship have become quite detached from that ambience. This is why, in our table, neither side of the polarity is represented in the column devoted to *Exegesis. I have said that *Logic-*Atomism is its double converse. First, it makes formal recognition of God and thus includes what is so oddly omitted from *Exegesis. And second, the detachment of *Logic-*Atomism from the springs of religion occurred in a way opposite to the manner in which it happened to *Exegesis. *Exegesis has moved away, as it were, from the religious origins from which it sprang. *Logic-*Atomism was without such religious origins, but moved towards a more *orthodox religious form by engrafting a doctrine of God (as well as recognition of *revelation).

There is one further point about the revision of the bottom two lines of our table. Rāmānuja, as we noted, recognized (perhaps grudgingly) the possibility of a form of *release through identification with the *self in yogic experience. It was an inferior form: but it should be registered on our table (it is interesting that in the *Gītā* there is a rather similar doctrine of priorities in *release as between those who follow the path of *devotion and those who isolate the *self in inner experience).

The lower part of the table can now be revised as follows (where the numbers register in an unavoidably crude way the priority-relations between the different forms of spiritual activity, etc.):

	ND	VO	ID	QN	DU	SD	YO	DI	EX	JA	ED	MA
*devotion	1	1	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
*devotional meditation	–	–	–	–	2	2	1	–	–	–	–	–
*meditation-*knowledge	3	3	3	1	0	0	3	4	0	4	4	0

This revision clarifies a number of things not quite obvious in our previous correlation of doctrines and religious attitudes.

(1) An element of (pure, i.e. neglecting devotional *meditation) *devotionalism implies a doctrine of a personal *Lord.

(2) Where *meditation outweighs *devotionalism, but where the latter exists, there is a doctrine of an Absolute.

(3) Exclusive concentration of *meditational means of salvation is correlated with a belief in a plurality of *selves or (in the *Elder

Doctrine) with a virtual pluralism, and certainly not with a monistic doctrine.

(4) Where *devotionalism outweighs the *meditative side of the polarity, there is a doctrine of the *Lord as the supreme reality.

We can also note certain points about one or more of the systems. Thus Rāmānuja represents *Non-Dualism upside down, so to speak. It contains an exact reversal of priorities. Again, *Qualified Non-Dualism, *Dualism and the *Śaivite Doctrine involve roughly equal elements of *devotionalism, though it is more intensely expressed in the first of the three. It is perchance no accident that these three come closest to theism as it is conceived in the faiths of Semitic origin. Again, Yoga among all the systems which include a *Lord, has the weakest *devotional element: it should thus occasion no surprise that the position of the *Lord is rather marginal in the history of the *viewpoint and that he is not conceived as having the *creative powers usually ascribed to the *Lord elsewhere in Hinduism.

A reflection on all this serves to show an important point about the Absolutistic schools. They succeed in integrating the doctrine of God into an essentially *meditative ambience in such a way that it is quite clear that worship and *devotion are quite secondary. This contrasts with the status of the *Lord in Yoga (which might up to a point be thought to be expressing a similar priority), who is both semi-detached and something of an afterthought. In any event for Yoga there was not the same compelling need as in the Greater Vehicle to integrate popular religion with the quest for nirvana. The forces of *devotion were more powerful there, and had important associations with a strong ethic of compassion and self-sacrifice. Thus we might claim that the notion of an Absolute (which is sometimes thought to be typical of mysticism—the seeing the One in All) only emerges in the fully-fledged form which we find in later Buddhist and mediaeval Indian religion as a concept which paradoxically owes its application to *devotionalism rather than to mysticism pure and simple. To put the matter in another way: the typical expression of contemplative religion in India is pluralistic, not monistic.

One main reason for this paradox is as follows. The more advanced or developed forms of *devotionalism move unmistakably in the direction of a single object of worship—or at least a unified complex of such lords. The many gods are seen as subordinate manifestations of the supreme *Lord: the many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the one Being, essentially. Thus *devotionalism increasingly requires an underlying unity in the objects of its expression. By conceiving of the

Buddhas as united mysteriously in their *Truth-Body, and by the identification of this with ultimate reality, the Greater Vehicle schools provided such a unified focus to popular religion. It is interesting by contrast to notice the situation in the *Elder School. For the *Elders, there was no question of worshipping the Buddha, for doctrinal reasons. There could thus be no outlet for *devotionalism in accordance with Buddhist orthodoxy, save in relation to existing, non-Buddhistic cults. Thus polytheism was retained, on condition that it was to be seen by the faithful as in the last analysis quite irrelevant to spiritual welfare. The gods were overcome by being ignored. Polytheism was transcended not in the direction of theism, but by nirvana, which had nothing to do with worship, etc. But, as we have said, the situation in the Greater Vehicle was very different. *Devotionalism was incorporated into the faith, and was recognized through doctrines which approached theism but at the same time were themselves subordinate to the concept of an Absolute with which the contemplative could identify himself through inner experience.

The Absolute, therefore, in Buddhism served two functions. First, in its emptiness, its *Voidness, its impersonality, it retained the qualities of nirvana: that is, it was recognizable that the contemplative goal of the Greater Vehicle had strong analogies to the nirvana conceived in the Lesser. Second, and relevantly to our remarks about the paradox of the Absolute, the Absolute served as a substratum in which the Buddhas manifested to the religious imagination of devotees could inhere. It was not surprising, then, that in later developments of the Greater Vehicle there should emerge a tendency to treat the Absolute itself as a personal Being, and for a form of theism (or something close in spirit to theism) to usurp the quest for nirvana as originally understood. It was not surprising, for it meant that *devotionalism had broken through the barrier with which the classical Mahāyāna concept of the Absolute presented. This barrier lay in idealism of one kind or another: the notion that the ordinary world of experience is self-contradictory if taken as independently real. Such an idealism was co-ordinated to a two-level theory of truth, as we saw. Thus the Absolute was the higher truth—the goal to which, like fingers pointing at the moon, the doctrines ultimately refer. But the *Lord belongs to the lower realm—the ambit of men's imagination. Thus in the Greater Vehicle schools, *devotionalism, together with something approaching theism, is incorporated, but made subordinate to the contemplative knowledge of the Absolute.

This transition from a virtually pluralistic system (as carried on by

the *Elder School) was made the easier by the form of that virtual pluralism. The repudiation of the doctrine of *selves meant that the Buddha, while retaining the rough form in which early Indian mystical religion was expressed—in Jainism and the precursors of Yoga, for example—had strictly speaking gone beyond *soul-pluralism. It was thus a possibility that sooner or later nirvana might be conceived as a monistic reality, rather than as a state attained separately by divers individuals. Thus the way was open to the Greater Vehicle reinterpretation of the transcendent.

The Absolutism of the Greater Vehicle of course had a considerable influence upon Śaṅkara; and we can see similar factors at work in his metaphysics. Again, the two levels of truth mean that he can incorporate *devotionalism without allowing it to capture the castle.

We may note too that though idealism or *illusionism is a means of expressing the lower status of *devotion and of ordinary life, when compared with the resplendent attainment of contemplative *insight, it also directly expresses something of mysticism itself. In the pluralistic systems which concentrate upon yoga and *meditation, *release means that the *soul vanishes from the world. The world is conceived as real, and the *soul simply vanishes from it. This concept of liberation reflects the 'voidness' of the contemplative's consciousness—voidness, that is, in terms of the perceptions, images and thoughts arising out of, and referring to, empirical existence. But in Śankara the situation is, so to speak, reversed: the world, looked at from the standpoint of the illuminated *self, vanishes. And though for ordinary purposes one still has to go on living in the world and uttering statements about empirical matters, the world no longer looks as it once did: it is an insubstantial wraith, a dream, a grand illusion, God's conjuring trick.

It may be objected to the above analysis of how injection of *devotionalism turns contemplative pluralism into a doctrine of the Absolute, that it is not sufficiently historical. For if Śankara be a case in point, surely it should be recognized that he derives his monism from the Upaniṣads. There are several remarks to be made about this. First, though there are *Non-Dualistic elements in the Veda, we still need to explain why Indian theologians and metaphysicians came to interpret *revelation in such differing ways. Our analysis is clearly relevant to the various emphases placed upon different statements in *revelation, which justify the various interpretations. Second, the analysis fits the Greater Vehicle schools, and these in turn influenced Śankara, as we saw. Third, a similar analysis has to be given about Upaniṣadic *non-dualism itself. That is, the Upaniṣads unmistakably

manifest the importation into Aryan religion of yogic elements, including belief in rebirth, which were not characteristic at all of the early parts of *revelation. In short, the sacrificial religion of the earlier period, and the worship of gods and God, is seen here for the first time in relation to the yogi's inner quest. The identification of the holy *Power with the *self within represents the supreme expression, in the Upaniṣads, of the synthesis between these two forms of religion. That an impersonalistic interpretation of the Upaniṣads was possible for Śankara and others, through the doctrine of the Absolute, was facilitated by the fact to which we have already referred—that the *Power was conceived not merely as a holy Being sustaining the cosmos in a personal way, as *Creator, but also as the force implicit in the sacrifice: an impersonal force. A generalization of this sacrificial idea meant that the whole cosmos was one great ritual in which and through which the *Power worked. It followed that in the Upaniṣads there is a considerable ambivalence between the personal and impersonal aspects of the holy *Power. Thus again, it is as well to see Upaniṣadic religion as a synthesis between the cult of the numinous, whether personally or impersonally conceived, and the interior yogic quest. Here too there was a tendency for *soul-pluralism to be swallowed up into a monistic doctrine. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to see any one teaching as running consistently through all the classical Upaniṣads, and this is one reason for the divergence of interpretations. But in this connection our first remark in reply to the objection must be repeated with emphasis: we want to know why one interpretation rather than another was put upon *revelation, and here the analysis in terms of different strands of religious practice and experience is extremely relevant.

The thesis that *Distinctionism, Yoga, Jainism and Buddhism represent a common stream of non-Aryan religion (a thesis which lies behind the remarks above about the importation of yogic elements in the Upaniṣads) is seen to have some force when we contemplate the first table. If we remove the notion of a *Lord from Yoga (in accordance with its most probable state early on in its development), we note that *Distinctionism, Yoga and Jainism have an exactly similar pattern, and *Elder Buddhism diverges in only one main particular. However, it is not merely doctrinal likeness that the thesis is based on, but mythological similarity also (especially as between Jainism and Buddhism).

We may sum up our results so far by enunciating the following principles which appear to determine the shape of the main systems in the Indian tradition:

(1) Contemplative religion, in its 'pure' form, i.e. where *devotionalism and worship are neglected as irrelevant to *release, etc., is either pluralistic or (in the case of early Buddhism) starts from, but transcends, pluralism.

(2) *Devotional religion is correlated with a doctrine of a *Lord, regarded as distinct from *souls and the world.

(3) Contemplative religion is formulated as the quest for identification with the Absolute when it receives a strong injection of *devotionalism and worship.

In brief, the various patterns of Indian metaphysics reflect a varied emphasis upon *meditation and *devotionalism.

That Indian mysticism should, in a sense, be typically pluralistic, and, in Buddhism of an early period, non-monistic; and that it should be typically *atheistic or agnostic;—these ideas may strike some people, brought up in the tradition of the West, as strange. We are accustomed to think of mysticism and the contemplative life as directed towards God or a transcendent Ultimate Reality. It is also usual to think of monism as expressing an important aspect of mystical experience, the seeing of all things in One. This is 'panenhenic' mysticism, of which Professors Zaehner and Stace have written. Nevertheless, though I would be far from denying that the experiences of seeing all things in one, and of gaining an ineffable *rapport* with nature, are not absent from Indian religion (it may be that some passages in the Upaniṣads reflect such an experience), the inner quest for a luminous state of pure consciousness, however this may be theologically interpreted, is much more central to the mystical tradition, both in East and West. It is an experience in the depths of the soul, not directed to outer reality as the panenhenic feeling is. Now in regard to interior contemplation it is certainly necessary to distinguish between experience and interpretation (as we remarked earlier). Those who tread the contemplative path do so in a certain conceptual ambience, and a certain religious milieu. The way they interpret their experience is obviously much affected by that ambience and milieu. Moreover, the differing conceptions of the nature of the path may directly affect the experience itself—injecting into it, as it were, an unconscious interpretation. It is for this reason extremely hard to tell about a given description of mystical experience how much is due to interpretative elements and how much to the experience itself. It is thus a dangerous procedure to say that, in regard to diversely described interior visions, there are in evidence different *types* of experience. For this reason I would be somewhat disinclined to assert that

the *soul-pluralistic mysticism which typifies yoga is a different variety in essence from the theistic mysticism of, say, the Theravāda. It may perchance be so: but there is little advance in explanation where we account for the idiosyncrasies of different theologies and metaphysical schemes merely by postulating a different kind of experience to go with each. It is true that we need to distinguish more than one kind of religious experience if any explanation in these terms is possible: but our division between the religion of worship on the one hand and mysticism on the other seems to supply sufficient material with which to explain the varied patterns of Indian theology—the diversity of pattern arising from the varied strengths of the two ingredients.

Moreover, it is not unnatural at all that mysticism should in its 'pure' state be interpreted in a *soul-pluralistic way. Only if you already possess the concept of God, for instance, does it make sense to interpret the inner vision as a vision of such a transcendent Being. If one's religious quest is simply concentrated upon inner contemplation, and if God and worship are irrelevant, and the gods peripheral, it is very natural to see the yogic experience as a realization of the eternal element lying 'within' the individual. It is at first sight, moreover, natural enough to think of there being many such *souls. This of course is especially likely if there is already the belief in rebirth with its attendant assumption that there is an everlasting something which transmigrates from body to body. It is therefore most understandable that pluralism should be the typical form of non-*theistic mysticism in the Indian tradition—only to be modified when it comes into synthesis with other religious elements.

But it is also intelligible, as we have seen in discussing the *Elder Doctrine, that a transcendence of such *soul-pluralism should be taught as a further, and in many respects more subtle, interpretation. For since the experience of the yogi involves going beyond the ordinary discriminations of perceptual, imaginative and ratiocinative experience, thus attaining a certain 'voidness', looked at from the point of view of the world, it is rather hard to distinguish one mystic's content of experience from another's. The undifferentiated nature of the experience thus opens the way to the abandonment of the notion of individual *souls or *selves, though without the implication that therefore there is just one *Self. (Where discriminations do not apply, neither do numbers, including the number *one*!) Thus the Buddhist position of, so to say, starting from a pluralistic base but going beyond it is an intelligible development from *soul-pluralism. Of course, other motives and reasons entered into the Buddhist denial of the *selves,

as we saw: it is, for one thing, part of the attack upon the notion of the substantial *permanence of things. It is worth remarking too that of all the systems, the *Elder Doctrine has the least element of interpretation in its account of the contemplative attainment. Neither *Lord nor *self is invoked in the description of nirvana. It is thus 'pure' mysticism, not only in the sense of not including worship and *devotionalism as central to its concerns—indeed these, especially at an early stage, were quite neglected, and even later given no doctrinal sanction or justification—but also in the sense of having a minimal amount of doctrinal ramifications built into its descriptions.

It is worth commenting too on the way in which the religion of worship is expressed by the notion of a distinction between the *Lord and *selves. For the attitude of worship, and a sense of the holy or numinous other, as object of worship, implies a distinction between the worshipper and the Object of worship. This has, for instance, a very vivid expression in the prophetic faiths of Semitic origin. But also too in the Indian tradition, the proponents of *devotionalism as being the centre of the religious life stress the difference between God and the soul. Thus it is that Madhva and Rāmānuja felt clearly the need to repudiate Śankara's monism, since it ultimately made nonsense of the worship of Viṣṇu as supreme Being. Nevertheless, the strong emphasis on mystical experience in the Indian tradition, with its accompanying tendency to be expressed, where the concept of a *Lord was present, as union with that Being, makes intelligible both the Upaniṣadic and the later Absolutistic identifications between the object of worship and the object of mystical experience. The non-duality of the experience, the absence from it of empirical discriminations, etc., lead very naturally to this idea of union. But where the union is interpreted as identity, clearly the notion of a *Lord as a distinct being and object of worship is seen to be illusory. What the worshipper sees as an Other is, in the last resort, identical with him. So that in Mahāyāna Absolutism, the *devotee in worshipping the Buddha is in effect worshipping his own future state, when he has attained non-dual *enlightenment. Hence it is of interest to note that many *theistic interpretations of the mystical experience attempted to express the union, not as identity, but as a kind of spiritual marriage: here there is intimate union—the most intimate possible—and yet a distinction (expressed in another tradition through the phrase 'one flesh'). Thus, for example, in Śaivite Doctrine, there is the image of Śiva as *Lord, who moves the *selves through his *energy, so that they gain a union with him; and both the *energy and the *selves are feminine: so there is a marriage,

so to say, between the *selves and God's *energy or grace working in them, and the *Lord.

It is, of course, clear that a distinction between the *Lord and the devotee implies that if there are any eternal *selves, there are more than one. That is, dualism goes with *self-pluralism. (In principle one supposes that it might be possible to have a doctrine that all selves are united in one *Self and that this *Self is distinct from the *Lord whom it worships; but as far as I know such a doctrine is not propounded in the Indian tradition, and has a certain intuitive bizarreness.) The alliance between dualism and *soul-pluralism may indeed help to account for possible Jain influences on Madhva. But at all events, it meant that typical yogic mysticism could be incorporated into, but subordinated to, a *devotional *theism. Thus we might express the relation between yoga and *theism in the *orthodox Indian tradition by the following principle: where *devotion and *meditation are combined, a preponderance of the latter leads to *soul-monism, where the *Self is identified with ultimate reality; where on the other hand, there is a preponderance of *devotion, yoga retains its typical shape as involving a doctrine of *soul-pluralism. It is perhaps a paradox (but we have seen already why it is so) that yoga, when it takes on the ambience of a *devotionalism it ultimately seeks to swallow, loses its typically pluralistic expression; but when it is tamed by *devotionalism it is allowed its doctrine of many *selves. These remarks, however, have to be somewhat adapted when dealing with the Buddhist situation. For, as we have seen, it is only a virtual pluralism which is discoverable in the* Elder Doctrine. Thus in those later Mahāyāna schools which emphasized the personal nature of ultimate reality, and a religion of *devotion, rather at the expence of the contemplative goal which hitherto had formed the centre of Buddhist aspirations, one meets a situation analogous in some ways to that of pre-Christian Judaism: a belief in the Supreme *Lord, but no doctrine of the eternity of the *self.

There is one further feature of the pattern of Indian religion and metaphysics which needs to be kept in view. Already we have noted, in the case of *Exegesis, the phenomenon of 'detachment', whereby an integral element in a form of religion has become detached and made central to the scheme. For 'Exegesis, this element in ritual. There is something similar to be observed in the case of *Distinctionism. We have already noted the polarity within one arm of our main polarity between *meditation and worship, namely that between reflection upon metaphysical truths as a means of salvation and yogic self-training.

But the two in fact are integral to one another in a way in which *devotionalism and *meditation are not. For, as we have repeated frequently enough, the contemplative quest has a conceptual ambience whereby it is interpreted. The doctrines enshrined in that ambience are not merely objects of speculation, but have to be realized existentially through contemplative experience. Thus doctrine and yoga go side by side. Consequently, when *knowledge or *insight is spoken of in the Indian religious tradition, it does not just mean the kind of theoretical understanding which might accrue from, say, the study of physics. *Knowledge is spiritual: and it involves 'seeing' in inner experience the truth of what is taught. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of detachment does occur, so that some *Distinctionist writers can appear to say that one can gain *release from doing metaphysics.

The respective emphasis upon *knowledge and yoga accounts for the contrast between the *Void and the *Idealist schools of the Greater Vehicle. Nāgārjuna's elaborate critique of common-sense concepts and of views about ultimate reality were, of course, intended as part of a process whereby the aspirant could come to the *non-dual experience of the *Void: it formed an intellectual yoga to be conjoined with the classical methods of Buddhist *meditation. But the intellectualist emphasis (a paradoxical one, since the philosophizing was designed ultimately to break down intellectual constructions put upon reality—a kind of metaphysical judo) could easily lead to some neglect of the heart of the Buddhist life. The *Idealists, therefore, while holding a general metaphysical position which was pretty close to that of the *Void school, preferred to stress the concept of *consciousness in their scheme. This reflected the practical training of the Buddhist yogin in purifying his mind of the ordinary discriminations of empirical experience. Thus the relation between the *Void school and that of the *Yoga-practitioners corresponds somewhat to that between *Distinctionism and Yoga. But in so far as the *Voidist doctrines have remained a living force within the religious life of Buddhism, while *Distinctionism tends to serve only as a theoretical background to Yoga and a supplier of cosmological ideas to other schools, one can observe that *Distinctionism exhibits the phenomenon of detachment—it is a metaphysical system which has become somewhat removed from its sources in religious experience.

We may note another appearance of detachment. Jainism has the same yogic roots as *Distinctionism and Buddhism, though it retained the ideal of inner mystical *knowledge, it was also very considerably preoccupied with one aspect of the path of self-discipline. Its rather

materialistic notion of karma lent added weight to this tendency to stress asceticism. It was not only in Jainism, of course, that such fierce austerity was practised. Some degree of asceticism is indeed, it appears from the history of religions, integral to contemplative mysticism. But in Jainism there was a trend towards making fierce austerity itself a means of *release. The Buddha, who wished to gain enlightenment in experience, and not simply escape from a sorrowful world, evidently found that such an exclusive emphasis on self-mortification was scarcely helpful in this aim. Thus we might say this: while *Distinctionism leans towards intellectualism, Jainism leans in the opposite direction, and again away from the central concern of yoga, towards austerity.

We may sum up our analysis of the systems with a series of thumbnail sketches, beginning from the right of our table.

*Materialism: a repudiation of all religion, but crippled because its scepticism cut at the roots of protoscience.

*Elder Doctrine: a scholastic elaboration of early Buddhism, wherein pure mysticism is given a minimal interpretation, but with a pluralistic flavour—it lies genuinely between Jainism and *Materialism.

Jainism: contemplative *soul-pluralism with archaic roots, but leaning heavily towards the cultivation of austerity.

*Exegesis: here ritual has become detached from worship, and neither *meditation nor *devotion are relevant—so there is heaven without God and without *isolation.

*Distinctionism: *soul-pluralism which has an intellectualist slant, but arises out of yogic mysticism—it is the supplier of cosmology to many systems.

Yoga: *atheistic *soul-pluralism which has grafted on a *Lord, despite its almost exclusive concern with *meditation and neglect of genuine *devotionalism.

*Logic-*Atomism: an elaboration of protoscience and of patterns of dialectic, which has conformed to *orthodoxy by importing *theism.

*Śaivite Doctrine: the Śaivite *theist's contrast to the Śaivite Śankara, wherein *devotionalism infuses the *meditative life.

*Dualism: the Vaiṣṇavite counterpart to the foregoing: but though formally more theistic (by Western standards) than Rāmānuja, there is a less intense expression of the *soul's dependence on God, since *devotionalism, though it infuses *meditation, is less strongly expressed.

*Qualified Non-Dualism: while preserving the appearance of monism, it emphasizes God's grace and the *soul's dependence—it

shows most strongly the logic of *devotion at work in the Indian tradition.

*Idealism: here the Buddhist yogi stresses a side that could be neglected in *Voidist Absolutism.

*Voidism: the Absolutism par excellence of Buddhism, wherein mysticism is expressed monistically, because of a strong injection into the Buddhist tradition of *devotionalism.

*Non-Dualism: like the foregoing, it is an expression of contemplative religion which incorporates, rather than ignores, the religion of worship.

So much for our general analysis. The account involves reference to one main polarity—between worship and yoga. Within each arm there are others: between the *devotional side and the ritual, in the case of worship; between *knowledge and *meditation on the yogic side. The detachment of ritual from its proper objects (God or the gods) led to the *Exegete position; the detachment of metaphysical *knowledge from its roots in mysticism led to the *Distinctionist position. Likewise the powerful emphasis on austerity (some degree of which is an element in all yoga) was expressed by the Jains. Our whole account is, quite obviously, a tremendous simplification of the complex facts. But it is to be hoped that thus the wood can be distinguished, and not, as so often, only the trees. It involves too the assumption that the determination of metaphysics by forms of religious experience and practice occurs that way round and not conversely. Now it is of course perfectly true that individuals are much influenced by the doctrines which they are taught and in this sense it is certainly true that theology and metaphysics are in some degree determinative of religious experience. Nevertheless, the assumption, as a general thesis, requires little justification—it would be indeed odd if metaphysics, considered as sets of propositions to be entertained and believed by people, should have the enormous effect of creating out of nothing the powerful religious experiences of both great teachers and ordinary folk. It is easier to explain a dualism between God and the soul by reference to the experience of prophets and worshippers than to explain the latter by reference to a current doctrine of dualism. It is easier to see that the *Lord who is worshipped is also the God of metaphysics than to see why the God of metaphysics should be worshipped at all. In any event, if the correlations between doctrines and forms of religious life in the Indian tradition which I have been outlining is a valid one, some light will have been thrown on the situation.

I have, of course, not attempted to argue that one shape of metaphysics is better than any other. Nor have I attempted to argue for or against the veridical nature of *devotional or *meditative experience. These issues lie quite outside the tasks of description aand analysis, though of course these tasks are relevant to the questions of truth. One has to understand in order to believe—or not believe.

Glossary

[Ed.: Professor Smart's chapter utilizes the following asterisked English expressions as standardized translations of key Sanskrit and Pāli terms.

*atheism: *anīśvaravāda*
*creation: *sṛṣṭi*
*devotion: *bhakti*
*devotionalism: *bhaktimārga*
*Distinctionism: *Sāṃkhya*
*Dualism: *Dvaita*
*Elder Doctrine: *Theravāda, Sthaviravāda*
*energy: *śakti*
*enlightenment: *bodhi*
*Exegesis: *Mimāṃsā*
*heaven: *sagga, svarga*
*Idealism: *Vijñānavāda*
*illusion: *māyā*
*insight: *paññā, prajñā*
*insubstantiality: *adravyatā*
*isolation: *kaivalya*
*knowledge: *vidyā, jñāna*
*life-monad: *jiva*
*Logic-Atomism: *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*
*Lord: *īśvara, issara*
*Materialism: *Cārvāka, Lokāyata*
*meditation: *dhyāna, jhāna*
*Non-Dualism: *Advaita*
*ordinary: *vyāvahārika*
*orthodox: *āstika*
*peace: *santi, śānti*
*permanence: *nicca, nitya*
*Power: *Brahman*

*Qualified Non-Dualism: *Viśiṣṭādvaita*
*release: *mokṣa, mukti, nirvāṇa, etc.*
*revelation: *śruti*
*Śaivite Doctrine: *Śaiva Siddhānta*
*self: *ātman, atta*
*Self: the single *ātman* identified with *Brahman* in Advaita Vedānta
*soul: *puruṣa*
*Truth-Body: *dharmakāya*
*viewpoint: *darśana*
*Void: *śūnya*
*Voidism: *Mādhyamika, śūnyavāda*
*Voidness: *śūnyatā*

Daya Krishna

THREE MYTHS ABOUT INDIAN PHILOSOPHY*

I

Indian Philosophy, like Indian culture, seems peculiarly prone to arouse either violent antipathy or violent enthusiasm.[1] Rarely does it engender an attitude which tries to present and assess it coolly and *calmly*, without positive or negative emotion. Nothing perhaps stands more in the way of such an attitude than the universally accepted ideas which I wish to explore in this paper. These three ideas are treated as indubitable facts about Indian philosophy. They seem so self-evident to enthusiasts and detractors alike that to question them seems to question the very concept of

* Footnotes preceded by an asterisk were graciously contributed by Mlle Rita Régnier.

[1] This article is dedicated to Dr. B. N. Consul and his staff without whose surgical help and skill it might never have been completed. Dr. Consul holds the Chair of Ophthalmology at the Medical College, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur India.

Indian philosophy as it has been traditionally conceived and presented by almost every writer on the subject. Yet, it seems to me that the time has come to question the traditional picture itself, to raise doubts about the indubitable, to investigate the sacrosanct and the self-evident. Myths have always masqueraded as facts and many a time the emperor's nudity has only been discovered by a child's disingenuity.

The self-evident claims about Indian philosophy are legion. First and foremost to strike even the most careless eye is the claim to spirituality. Who does not know that Indian philosophy is spiritual? Who has not been told that this is what specifically distinguishes it from Western philosophy and makes it something unique and apart from all the other philosophical traditions of the world? The claim, of course, is never put to the test. In fact, it seems so self-evident as to require no argument or evidence on its behalf. Nobody questions it. In point of fact, no serious or even casual student of the subject deems it worth questioning.

Yet, the moment we begin to doubt the claim and examine it for what it is worth, we find it spurious and mythical, to say the least.

After all, what exactly is meant by calling a whole philosophical tradition "spiritual." The term, in the ontological context, means that the nature of ultimate reality is held to be the same or similar to that of mind or spirit. The distinctive feature lies in the assertion of the primacy of consciousness as opposed to the inertness associated with and displayed by objects that are purely material in their nature. Spirit is opposed to Matter and the spiritualist Metaphysics implies that Spirit *alone* is real and what appears as Matter is *only* an appearance, something illusory, something unreal. The qualifying terms "*alone*" and "*only*" are of the utmost importance, for without them the view held cannot be characterized as "spiritual" in the ontological sense of the term.

Viewed in this perspective, Indian philosophy can hardly be characterized as spiritual in character. It certainly is true that most of the schools of Indian philosophy* do recognize the ultimate

* In Indian philosophy one traditionally lists six systems or, better, "views" (*darśana*): *Mīmāmsā, Vedānta, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Vaisesika* and *Nyāya*. The followers or faithful can be designated respectively as *mīmāmsaka, vedāntin, sāmkhya, yogin, vaisesika* and *naivāyika*. The materialistic movement *cārvāka*, stands

reality of Spirit in some form or other. But so do they also recognize the ultimate reality of Matter in some form or other. The Jainas, the Vaisesikas and the Sāmkhyans recognize it so openly that it can hardly be missed by even the most starry-eyed student of the subject. The Cārvākas need not be mentioned in this connection, as they are regarded as "unmentionable" for this very reason by everybody except Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and Walter Ruben who turn the tables and regard all the others as "untouchables" of Indian philosophy. The Naiyāyikas are usually supposed to accept the Vaisesika metaphysics, but it is seldom noted that they go a step further in the Cārvāka direction. Unlike the Cārvākas, they certainly believe in the ontological reality of soul but they deny to it the essential characteristic of consciousness which alone, according to everybody else, differentiates it from Matter. Consciousness, according to the Naiyāyikas, is not an inalienable quality of the soul but rather, as the Cārvākas say, a quality which arises in it when a collocation of circumstances accidentally comes to pass. In a radical sense, then, the Naiyāyika thinker comes closest to the classic position of Materialism as propounded in the history of thought. He, of course, believes in the ontological reality of God also. But that is another story and another matter.

There remain the Buddhists, the Mīmāmsakas, the Vedāntins and the followers of the so-called Yoga school of philosophy. Among these, the Mīmāmsakas subscribe to the metaphysical reality of all the substances which the Nyāya-Vaisesika thinkers hold to be real. Only they add certain others of their own also. Any one who contends for the ultimate reality of earth, water, fire and air among other things, can hardly be considered to believe in the reality of spirit *alone*. As for the Buddhists, their fundamental denial is of substantiality, whether it be that of spirit or of matter. In fact, two of the traditional schools of Buddhism assert the reality of the external world while denying, of course, its substantiality. It is only the Yogācāra who explicitly contends for the ideality or mentality of whatsoever exists. The Mādhyamikas, like the Advaita Vedāntists of a later date, accept phenomenal

somewhat apart from the classical *darśana*. The bauddha (Buddhists) and the jaina (Jainas) embrace the doctrines proclaimed by the religious reformers Buddha and Jina.

reality and deny the ultimate reality of anything that can ever possibly be asserted.*

Vedānta, of course, is not Samkara-Vedānta only. It is merely a name to suggest that the philosopher who chose to call himself or his thought by that name assumed consciously the added responsibility of showing that that is exactly what the *Upanisads* really meant. Any doctrine, therefore, can call itself Vedānta provided it is prepared to sustain that it alone expresses the true and authentic meaning of the *Upanisads*. There are frank dualists like Mādhva who regard Matter or Prakrti as an eternal, independent principle in its own right and who call themselves Vedāntists. There is Rāmānuja who believes in the ultimate distinction in the nature of Matter from God but denies its independence in the sense of its not being subordinate to Him. And, then, there is the great Samkara who believes that the saying or the asserting of anything is in itself the surest sign of its ultimate unreality. For him, the individual soul and God are as unreal as Prakrti or Matter.

Matter, thus, is not unreal for Vedānta either. It is distinctly asserted to be ultimately real by the two major schools, those of Rāmānuja and of Mādhva. For the only remaining major school, the one of Samkara, it is as real as anything else. As for Yoga, it perhaps is counted among the traditional schools of Indian philosophy only as a matter of courtesy. There seems scarcely any reason to do so. It is entirely a system of practice and no one ever contends that it has any distinctive philosophical views of its own except the Sāmkhya view of the independent reality of Prakrti. It thus constitutes no exception to the almost universal acceptance of the ontic reality of Matter among the various schools of Indian philosophy.

Ontologically, then, the characterization of Indian philosophy as "spiritual" is completely erroneous. The only other context in which it may be regarded as "spiritual" is that of morals or ethics. Here, it certainly is true that Indian thought has held spiritual salvation as the highest goal of individual seeking and striving. But this, it should be remembered, is a generalized feature of tra-

* The Advaita Vedantins are followers of a special form of Vedānta which professes absolute monism (advaita). The *Yogācāras* ("those who practice *Yoga*") make up one school of Buddhism; the Mādhyamikas ("those who adopt 'half-way terms' or views") constitute still another.

ditional Indian culture as a whole. Philosophy, as it were, only *accepts* this goal which the culture in general had set for the individual. It, of course, articulates, accentuates, defines and redefines the goal in a sharper and more conscious manner.

Even here, it would be interesting to point out that it was not until later that Moksa as a distinctive separate goal was accepted in Indian thought. As is well known, the early formulations of the goals of human seeking confined them to no more than three in number. These were known as *dharma, artha* and *kāma* which may roughly be described as the realms of law, rule or the prescribed, on the one hand (*dharma*), with those of the things desired (*kāma*) and the instrumentalities for their realization (*artha*), on the other. The introduction into this tripartite division of the ends of human life of a fourth goal was not so much the result of philosophical speculation as of the emergence into prominence of certain trends which were already present in the religious atmosphere of India. The so-called Sramana* tradition of Sāmkhya, Bauddha and Jaina traditions, is the root source from which stems the concept of Moksa in the orthodox Vedic traditions of India.[2] These traditions, at their origins, were primarily religious and their importance lay rather in the spiritual exploration of man than in his philosophical speculation. In the course of their evolution, they certainly produced later philosophical thinkers who articulated and argued for the theoretic and conceptual position supposed to be relevant to the specific differential insights of the original religious founders of their traditions.

The ideal of Moksa was, thus, a later take-over from the nonvedic religious and spiritual traditions of India. In this process, it was given a more positive content than it had in the relatively more negative traditions of Buddhism, Jainism and Sāmkhya. The philosophers, here as there, defined and redefined, pointed out the difficulties of the concept and tried to meet those difficulties. But in the initial discovery of the concept they were not the initiators

* *Sramana*, term in diametric opposition to brāhmana (Brahmin) to designate a thinker or monk of lay origin as opposed to a member or representative of the sacerdotal caste.

[2] See G. C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism* (Allahabad University, Allahabad, India, 1957).

and innovators but only followers who worked and reworked what they had taken over or what had been handed down to them.

It may equally be remembered in this connection that there are few philosophers in any of the great historic traditions whose views on the ends of human life are not idealistic in some sense or other. The only distinctive feature of the Indian philosophers in this context seems to lie in their emphasis on the spiritual as against the moral, and the creation of a dichotomy or division between the two. The addition of Moksa as the fourth and final end of human seeking and striving was not a fulfilment of the other three but ultimately a denial or negation of them. Many thinkers of later India have striven to bridge the gulf between morality and spirituality but the legacy of the original dualism has persisted unchanged until today. The baffling paradox of a country which is felt by almost every foreigner to be at one and the same time the most spiritual and the most immoral can perhaps be rendered intelligible only in this way.

II

Indian philosophy, however, is not uniquely and distinctively characterized in terms of "spirituality" alone. There are other characterizations which are almost as universally current and which, on examination, are found to be as mythical as the one regarding spirituality. The other such characterization is in terms of "authority." Almost invariably, each writer on Indian philosophy starts his account by drawing a distinction between the "orthodox" and "unorthodox" schools of Indian philosophy. This distinction is drawn in terms of their acceptance or non-acceptance of the authority of the Vedas.

This is a commonplace about Indian philosophy, a commonplace that is repeated with such assurance of self-evidence that no possible doubt could be entertained about it. But what exactly could be meant by the acceptance of the Vedas as an authoritative basis for one's philosophical system? As far as I can see, the only legitimate meaning of such a claim in the philosophical context would be to maintain that the Vedas contain the ultimate philosophical truth and that the test of the truth of a philosophical

position is whether or not it is in accordance with what is written in the Vedas.

Now if this were to be really the case, then the differences between the so-called "orthodox" schools of Indian philosophy would arise from their varying interpretations of what the Vedas really meant. But, is it really so? Is it true to say that Sāmkhya or Yoga or Nyāya or Vaisesika differ about the exact meaning which is to be put on the Vedic texts? Are they, so to speak, schools of interpretation which clash over what the Vedas really mean? This obviously is not the case. The classical texts of the various schools are not, even in form, a commentary upon the vedic texts. The two schools which may seem an obvious exception to this are Mīmāmsā and Vedānta. The former specifically upholds the authority of the Vedas and the latter ostensibly champions a genuine interpretation of the *Upanisads* which are supposed to be a part of the Vedas. The various schools of Vedānta may be said, with some justification, to be schools of interpretation in the required sense of the term. But even if the various schools of Vedānta may legitimately be so designated, it would not do to interpret the differences between Mīmāmsā and Vedānta in the same way. They appear rather to differ as to what is to be regarded as really constituting the Vedas.

What, then, is to costitute the Vedas, seems to be the crucial question which first has to be answered if one is to have a meaningful discussion of the question about their authority in regard to Indian philosophy in particular and to Indian culture in general. The authoritative Vedas themselves were originally thought to be only three in number. Later, the authority of the fourth Veda also began to be accepted. In any case, the Vedas, it should be remembered, were always plural in number. Moreover, the authority of all of them was not equally securely established even during the times when they were being composed. Further, on the most conservative estimate, it took them at least a thousand years to assume their present shape. During these thousand years at least, their authority was never such as to preclude the possibility of making further additions to them. This obviously does not speak very much for their authority in those times. Later, even among those who have held seriously to their authority, there has always been a difference to which portion of the Vedas was to be

regarded as authoritative and in reference to what subject matters and for what purposes.

The latter, it has not always been noted, is almost as important as the former. The Mīmāmsā, for example, does not merely deny the *Upanisads* the privilege of being counted among the corpus of vedic authority but even contends that any utterance which is not a pure injunction, that is, either a command or a prohibition, is also to be considered as Veda. This, it should be emphasized, is a revolutionary position whose implications for the issue of vedic authority for philosophy in India have hardly ever been noted. Vedas, according to this view, have no philosophic content whatsoever. Being pure injunctions, they have nothing to do with epistemological or metaphysical speculations or even with ethical *reflection.* A command or a prohibition, however moral, is not a *reflection* on the nature and problem of morals which ethics undoubtedly is. The Mīmāmsaka's own philosophy, thus, is not a vedic philosophy at all since, according to him, Vedas do not contain any philosophy, whether of their own or of any other type. Vedic philosophy, strictly speaking, is a contradiction-in-terms and as such the purest type of non-being that we can imagine.

The Vedāntins, for their part, do certainly recognize the authority of the *Upanisads* but not of *Upanisads* only. They also recognize the authority of the *Gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtra* which are definitely not regarded as a part of the Vedas by anybody. Equally they honor with scant recognition the authority of the non-upanisadic portion of the Vedas. Nay more, their attitude to vedic autority is quite casual not to say almost Pickwickian in manner. Samkara, for example, in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, explicitly implies that they are not to be taken seriously when they deal with empirical matters of fact.[3] They are deemed authoritative only when they deal with transcendental matters alone. Thus, for Vedānta as well as for Mīmāmsā, the term Veda is restricted not only to certain portions of the classical vedic

[3] "A conflict of statements (in Vedānta-passages) regarding the world would not even matter greatly, since the creation of the world and similar topics are not at all what the scripture wishes to teach... the passages about the creation and the like form only subordinate members of passages treating of *Brahman.*" *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, Ed. Radhakrishnan and Moore (Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 516.

literature but also to certain of their contents or subject matter. The Vedas, in this way, enjoy only a very circumscribed authority even for Mīmāmsā and Vedānta, the only schools which seem to take it seriously.

The notion of "vedic" authority, then, is a myth. It certainly cannot be held to be the dividing line between the schools as has been stated by almost every text book on the subject. Yet, it may be contended that the issue of authority in Indian philosophy is far broader than the question of the authority of the Vedas. Even if it be conceded that the Vedas hold little authority for most schools of Indian philosophy, is it not true that something else fulfills that function? Do not the sūtras hold the same position and does not the time-honored way of writing philosophy in the form of commentaries on the traditional texts prove this? And, is not Sabda or Testimony* regarded as an independent pramāna, that is, both a criterion and a source of valid knowledge?

These two contentions seem so obviously convincing as to finally clinch the issue of authority in Indian philosophy. But, is it really so? Would not a closer look reveal something entirely different? Why should philosophers, of all people, be taken in by appearances without even critically examining them? After all, does not one of the so-called "orthodox" schools of Indian philosophy, that is, the Vaisesika, believe in Sabda or testimony as an independent source of valid knowledge? Why should these things be glossed over as if they were of no importance whatsoever? As for the authority of the Sūtras, one may legitimately ask what is the authority of the Nyāya-sūtras after Gangesa.

This, we should realize, is not just a rhetorical question asked to save a desperate situation. Rather, it should be seen as a plea for looking at the facts from a different vantage point. After Gaṇgesa, Nyāya does not merely take a new turn which was recognized as such by his contemporaries and the thinkers who came after him, but enters on a path of *continuous development* which leads later to such giants as Visvanātha, Gadādhara and Raghunatha Siromani. Such a continuous development and its proliferation into other schools provides decisive evidence against the view

* *Sabda* can mean both "sound" and "word"; by extension it may also mean "oral testimony". *Pramāna* means measure, authority, norm.

which gives to the sūtras an *unquestionable authority* for the whole school itself. The authority, rather, goes on changing and as soon as some new important thinker appears on the scene, the mantle falls on him and he becomes the point of departure for further thought.

This, it should be remembered, is not the case for Nyāya alone. The situation is not very much different for Vedānta or Mīmāmsā or Vaisesika or Sāmkhya. Yoga, as we have said earlier, is hardly a school of philosophy and thus need not be considered in this connection. It may, for example, be reasonably asked what is the authority of the *Brahma-sūtras* after Samkara for Advaitic Vedāntins. The numerous Advaita thinkers after Samkara take their departure from him and not from the *Brahma-sūtras*. Is this not true for such outstanding post-Samkarite figures as Padmapāda, Suresvara, Prakāsātman, Citsukha, Prakāsananda, Vacaspati Misra and Madhusūdan Saraswatī? Even the famous *Brahma-siddhi* of Mandan Misra is an independent work and not a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. There is, in fact, hardly any significant Advaitic commentary directly on the *Brahma-sūtras* after Samkara. They were just not seriously taken into account and if, in the present century, Radhakrishnan has chosen to write a commentary once again, it is rather because of the desire to follow in the path of the great Achāryas* than because of any real belief in their overriding authority for his own philosophical thought.

It is, of course, true that Rāmānuja, Mādhva and Nimbārka wrote their independent commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* after Samkara. But they did this merely because they wanted to depart fundamentally from the Advaitic interpretation of the *Brahma-sūtras*. The great subsequent thinkers of these schools cared hardly at all for the *Brahma-sūtras*. There is no difference in this respect between the post-Samkarite thinkers of the Advaitic school and, say, the post-Rāmānuja, the post-Mādhva and the post-Nimbārka thinkers of these respective schools. Thus, even where a great thinker tries to buttress his new thought by an appeal to the traditional texts, his immediate successors take him as the point of departure and not the text from which he presumedly derived his thought.

* *Āchāryas* means spiritual master.

The same may be said about Mīmāmsā, the other great school which ostensibly argues a great deal in favor of the authority of the traditional texts. The sutras of Jaimini hold little interest or authority after Prabhākara and Kumārila. It is they who are discussed, argued, assented to or differed with. Sāmkhya and Vaisesika have no great independent lines of outstanding thinkers around them. The first has hardly any original sūtras which could even reasonably be construed as providing the authoritative text for the system. Iswarkrsna's Sāmkhya-Kārikā is the oldest known text of the system. But, as everybody recognizes, the system is far, far older than this and Iswarkrsna can hardly be said to enjoy any exceptional authority except as a clue to some of the main tenets which the thinkers belonging to this school generally held. As for Vaisesika, it is Prasastapāda who provides us with a real perspective on Vaisesika thought. Subsequent Vaisesika thinkers generally start from Prasastapāda's work. Sūtras themselves, it should be remembered, are *only* cogent summaries of previous thought. They are, thus, simultaneously the end of a line of thought and the point of departure for a fresh philosophical enterprise. It is only thus that they make sense and not as the final arbiters of what may legitimately be thought by a philosopher in India. The latter way of presenting them is usual, but it is so totally false that one wonders how it ever came to be propagated and accepted.

The Buddhists and the Jainas have no sacred *philosophical* texts, except the *Abhidharma,* which may be regarded as vested with the type of authority that the Vedas and the Sūtras are supposed to enjoy in the so-called "orthodox" tradition of Indian philosophizing. There are important thinkers and important books but nothing vested with a divine or superhuman authority. This is as it should be, and my contention is that it is the same with the so-called classical schools of Hindu philosophy.

III

The myth of spirituality and the myth of authority are not the only two myths about Indian philosophy. There is a third one which is even more subtle than the other two. This is the myth of the schools without which no book on Indian philosophy has yet

been written. The myths of spirituality and authority are stated on the first pages and the conveniently forgotten. The schools however, are in a different category. They are the very stuff or rather the very structure out of which and around which the whole story of Indian philosophy has been woven. Indian philosophy is divided first into the "orthodox" and the "unorthodox" schools and then these are subdivided into Buddhism, Jainism and Cārvāka on the one hand, and into Nyāya, Vaisesika, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Mīmāmsā and Vedānta on the other. This is the unvarying classification one reads about and the only attempt at a little exception is that of Karl H. Potter in his *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*. But Potter has only tried to diversify the picture a little and not to question it in its very foundations as we are trying to do here.

The classification into schools is time-honored and accepted even by the classical thinkers themselves. Why, then, should we attempt to question it? But it is at least equally apparent that the veil of authority and the veil of spirituality were woven and accepted also by the classical thinkers. So, there is nothing distinctively different in this respect which may be said to apply to the problem of "schools" alone.

The concept of "school" is closely tied up to the concept of "authority" in Indian philosophy. If the authority of the Vedas or the *Upanisads* or the Sūtras is final, then what is presumed to be propounded in them as philosophy is final also. There thus arises the notion of a closed school of thought, final and finished once and for all. This may seem fantastic, but most presentations of the various schools of Indian philosophy are so non-historical in their nature that they belie the title *History of Indian Philosophy* under which they are usually presented. History is always the story of change, development, differentiation, innovation. How can there be any real history if some primordial authority is posited at the very beginning of thought? If, therefore, we deny the "authoritative" character of Indian philosophy then, in an important sense, we deny the concept of "schools" also. There is no such thing as final, frozen positions which the term "school," in the context of Indian philosophy, usually connotes. If "schools" change, develop, differentiate, divide then they are never closed, finished or final with respect to what they are trying to say. There

could, then, be no fixed body of Nyāya-Vaisesika, Sāmkhya, Mīmāmsā, Vedānta, Bauddha, Jaina or Cārvāka positions except in a minimal sense. These would, on the other hand, be rather styles of thought which are developed by successive streams of thinkers and not fully exemplified by any. Nor would these styles be treated as exhausted by any group or groups of thinkers belonging to any particular historical epoch.

The difference between a "school" and a "style" of thought is not merely a verbal one, as many may think. The question centers on the issue of how one is to conceive these so-called schools of Indian philosophy. Are they something like the various schools that one meets with in Western philosophy? Are they something of the same kind as, say, "rationalism," "empiricism," "realism," or "idealism"? If so, there is no problem, for while each of these has a recognizable identity of its own, it still has had and is capable of continuous development in new and varied directions. No single thinker or group of thinkers could ever exhaust what is signified by any of these schools of Western philosophy. The case of Indian philosophic schools would then be similar.

However, the traditional presentation of the schools of Indian philosophy is hardly ever along these lines. They are treated as something finished and final. No distinction, therefore, is ever drawn between the thought of an individual thinker and the thought of a school. A school is, in an important sense, an abstraction. It is, so to say, a logical construction springing out of the writings of a number of thinkers who share a certain similarity of outlook in tackling similar problems. On the other hand, it is also some sort of an ideal governing the direction of thought as well as a Platonic idea, more or less exemplified in one thinker rather than another. In more modern terms, it may also be conceived as a morphological form which both governs the evolution of species and is intuited from a continuous and varied observation of them. These different ways of understanding the concept of "school" should be treated not as exclusive alternatives but rather as supplementary to each other.

Basically, this is the reality of the "schools" of Indian philosophy also. Yet it is never presented as such. Sāmkhya, for example,

is too much identified with Iswarkrsna's work or Vedānta with the work of Samkara. But this is due to a confusion between the thought of an individual thinker and the style of thought which he exemplifies and to which he contributes in some manner. All that Samkara has written is not strictly Advaita Vedānta. Nor is all that Iswarkrsna has written Sāmkhya. Unless this is realized, writings on Indian philosophy will continuously do injustice either to the complexity of thought of individual thinkers concerned or to the uniqueness of the style of thought they are writing about. If such an injustice is to be avoided, then the history of Indian philosophy will either be the history of individual thinkers in relation to each other or the history of styles of thought as growing over a period of time. In this, then, it will be no different from a history of Western or any other philosophy which also can be and has been written in either of the two ways.

IV

Indian philosophy, then, is neither exclusively spiritual nor bound by unquestionable, infallible authority, nor constricted and congealed in the frozen molds of the so-called "schools" which are supposed to constitute the essence of Indian philosophy by every one who has written on the subject. These are just plain myths and unless they are seen and recognized to be such, any new fresh look at Indian philosophy would be impossible. The dead, mummified picture of Indian philosophy will come alive only when it is seen as a living stream of thinkers who have grappled with difficult problems that are, philosophically, as alive today as they were in the ancient past. Indian philosophy will become contemporarily relevant only when it is conceived as philosophy proper.[4] Otherwise, it will remain merely a subject of

[4] See my article: "Three Conceptions of Indian Philosophy," in the forthcoming issue of *Philosophy East and West* (Hawaii, USA).

It has been asked what I mean by "philosophy proper." The only thing I wish to make clear in this context it that the Indian philosophical tradition is "philosophical" in the same sense as is Western philosophical tradition.

antiquarian interest and research which is what all the writers on Indian philosophy have made it out to be. It is time that this false picture be questioned and that the living concerns of ancient thought be made alive once more. The destruction of these three myths would represent a substantial step in this direction.[5]

[5] I have been greatly helped in this paper by discussions with Dr. G. C. Pande, the outstanding scholar on Indian philosophy and culture and at present Tagore Professor of Indian Culture in the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India. I am also thankful to Dr. S. K. Gupta of the Sanskrit Department in the University for bringing to my attention the different meanings of the term "Veda" in the tradition of classical Indian thought.

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